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ABSTRACT

The seventh volume of a 10-volume report, this document discusses the findings of the study's state component, especially as the activities of the states relate to and are influenced by federal dissemination programs. An analysis of the dissemination and school improvement activities in 10 states revealed 2 distinct orientations. Some states were "maintenance" oriented, maintaining a separation between the dissemination activities of the various categorical federal programs and initiating no statewide effort or project for improvement. Other states had a "development" orientation, coordinating federal support in such a way that local education agencies were required or encouraged to mount efforts to improve their functioning and/or their instructional processes. The volume analyzes the antecedents, characteristics, and accomplishments of both kinds of orientations and draws implications for federal and state policy. (TE)

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People, Policies, and Practices: Examining the Chain of School Improvement, Volume VII

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The Configuration of Federal and State Dissemination Activities

EA 016 486

Volume VII

The Configuration of Federal and State Dissemination Activities

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A STUDY OF DISSEMINATION EFFORTS SUPPORTING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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PREFACE

The Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement was a comprehensive, three-year examination of a broad spectrum of federal and state dissemination activities. It included a close look at selected strategies designed to improve schools by promoting the adoption and use of new educational practices developed with federal support. Sponsored by the Office of Planning and Evaluation of the U.S. Department of Education, the study was conducted by The NETWORK, Inc., in collaboration with several other research and development organizations, including the University of Texas' R&D Center for Teacher Education, the American University's Knowledge Transfer Institute, the Center for Policy Research, and UCLA's Center for the Study of Evaluation.

The study examined four distinct levels of the educational system: federal, state, external agent, and local. A "zoom lens" design began with an overview of forty-five programs in the U.S. Department of Education that engaged in dissemination or dissemination-related activities. Fifteen of these programs were selected for in-depth analysis at the federal level. At the state level, we examined dissemination activities in ten states representative of the continental forty-eight.

Four strategies, each reflected in a selected federal program, were chosen for in-depth investigation at the local level. The strategies, and their programmatic exemplars, are:

- Interpersonal Linkage of Validated Practices, exemplified by the National Diffusion Network (NDN), including its ESEA Title I subnetwork
- Commercial Distribution, exemplified by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped Marketing Program
- State Administration of Dissemination, exemplified by ESEA Title IV-C Adoption Grants
- Local Development/Invention, exemplified by ESEA Title IV-C Development Grants

A close look at 146 schools and school districts in the ten states, whose improvement efforts were supported by one of these programs, allowed us to answer three important questions:

1. To what extent are new practices supported by the federal programs being implemented in schools?
2. What factors influence successful implementation?
3. How are policies, conceived at one level, implemented at other levels?

Because three of the four programs chosen rely on implementing practices developed outside the local setting, we were interested in the vehicles employed by the programs for dissemination, particularly the assistance provided by external agencies and individuals.

Focusing-in the lens one more time, we conducted an intensive field study of twelve of our local sites over the course of a school year. Here, we were able to examine the interpersonal and organizational dynamics surrounding implementation as school people worked to incorporate innovative practices.

The study as a whole was a massive effort that required the energies and resources of countless people. Altogether, we:

- interviewed and surveyed over 5,000 educators;
- accumulated over 1500 hours of interview tapes;
- spent over 700 person-days "on the road;"
- made approximately 150 observations; and
- analyzed over 400 documents.

The three years were spent in design (Year 1), data collection (Years 1 and 2), and data analysis (Years 2 and 3).

The master report, People, Policies, and Practices: Examining the Chain of School Improvement, consists of ten volumes which describe the results of the study. Volume I (Setting the Stage for a Study of School Improvement) sets the study within a framework of federal school improvement policies and past studies of these policies. The objectives, design, and research methodologies used in the study are also described.

Volume II (Portraits of the Changes, the Players, and the Contexts) describes what was found in the 146 school districts that comprised our local site sample. Characteristics of the people, the innovations, and the settings are reported, as are the contributions of external assistance and the outcomes accrued from involvement in school improvement.

Volume III (Models of Change) introduces the causal models of the school improvement process that helped us determine what factors influenced success. The findings are reported for several outcomes at both the organizational (school) and individual (teacher) level.

In Volume IV (Innovation Up Close: A Field Study in Twelve School Settings), we examine the dynamics of twelve districts -- varying in experience with the new practices, in community type, and in the scope of their efforts -- involved in improvement efforts supported by the National Diffusion Network or ESEA Title IV-C

Local Development Grants. The volume provides an in-depth picture of the motivations, behaviors and aspirations of school people as new practices are implemented and maintained.

Volumes V, VI and VII analyze the government's role in dissemination for school improvement. In Volume V (Dissemination for School Improvement: An Analysis of Nine Federal Education Programs), we profile nine widely different federal programs sponsored by the then U.S. Office of Education. The volume examines the assumptions underlying the programs, and how these shaped each program's dissemination strategy.

In Volume VI (Dissemination at the National Institute of Education: Contending Ideas about Research, Practice, and the Federal Role), six federal dissemination programs funded by the NIE are examined. We tell the story of the programs' emergence, implementation, and -- to the degree possible -- impact, and discuss implications of the programs for the federal role in dissemination.

In Volume VII (Configuration of Federal and State Dissemination Activities), we present a comparative analysis of federal-state relationships for dissemination and school improvement in our ten sample states. We examine the impact of federal initiatives and other critical influences on the roles and operations of state education agencies.

Volume VIII (The Infrastructure of Innovation: The Case of the National Diffusion Network) examines the communication and rewards structure of a single federal program -- the National Diffusion Network. We examine the NDN as a decentralized service delivery system which has evolved to a grass-roots effort with greatly reduced dependence upon federal leaders for direction and control. Network analysis, based on a census of all members and adjuncts of the NDN, provides interesting insights into a unique federal program.

Volumes IX and X summarize our efforts. Volume IX (Implications for Action) integrates findings from all components of the study, and discusses implications for policy and practice at all levels of the educational enterprise. Volume X, our Executive Summary, provides a distillation of study methods and findings for a general audience, as well as an annotated bibliography of the report series and related study documents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement engaged literally a cast of thousands. At the peak of activity, it involved some 5,000 educators from all parts of the country, with a wide range of roles and responsibilities, whose only commonality was the desire to improve the education of our nation's youth. Although it is impossible to personally thank everyone, we pause here to acknowledge their important contributions.

Our Project Officer: Ann Bezdek Weinheimer, for her superb guidance and unending support;

Our Policy Advisory Group: Dave Clark, Ellie Farrar, Michael Fullan, Hendrik Gideonse, Egon Guba, Milbrey McLaughlin, David Wiley, and Ward Mason, for their help in conceptualization and design, and their thorough and honest feedback;

Our Senior Consultants: Jeff Eiseman, Gene Hall, Ann Lieberman, Matt Miles, and Bill Schmidt, for keeping us on track early in the study, and contributing substantively to design, analysis and reporting;

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Our NETWORK Support Team: Pat Bales, Margaret Broderick, Ronna Coppola, Kory Hellmer, Clif Lund-Rollins, Elsa Martz, Nancy Lund, Nick Thorkelson, Annemarie Lenson, and Ruth Anne Shepard who edited, typed, organized, copied, served, drew, retyped, collated, hustled, and cleaned up after us times too numerous to mention, for all of that and more;

And finally, to the people who other studies label "respondents" but whom we considered and related to as "collaborators": over 4,000 teachers, nearly 400 building and district administrators, 100 people in external assistance roles, 50 personnel in ten state departments of education and 100 federal program staff, for their dedication to making schools a better place for people, and helping us learn the good news:

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS ARE ALIVE AND WELL
IN SCHOOLS ACROSS THE U.S.!

And, on a more personal note:

They said it couldn't be done; parts of it, yes. The whole humongous thing? No way! But we believed, we persevered, and we succeeded.

Managing (producing?) an enterprise of this scale and complexity was not unlike being entrusted with a string of race horses while also being expected to efficiently operate race tracks all over the country. One's charges must run, sometimes for practice, sometimes in claim races, sometimes for fun, and sometimes for substantial purses. At the tracks, stands must be cleaned, popcorn purchased, receipts counted, special events trumpeted, sound systems repaired. Oh yes, add to this the necessity of producing a comprehensive story of each season's successes (and failures), with appropriate statistical detail for the aficionados and photos for the occasional attendee. Perhaps such images will help you connect with the range of reactions I have had to this point, when all that remains of the season is the final manuscript which down-plays the thrills and recalls the tribulations.

Although flashes of Hercules and his labors in the stables come to mind, as do painful recollections of the occasional reluctance of the imported studs to perform as desired, and more than a few false breaks at the gate, overall I am immensely satisfied with both the process and the product of our collective odyssey. On balance, it was a frolic with a wonderful group of thoroughbreds.

All the players in our production performed admirably; their contributions were manifold. Three are worthy of special mention, one whose contribution was the necessary catalyst at the front-end, enabling our adventure to commence and continue; one whose firm hand kept us on our course; and another whose contribution at the back-end ensured the successful conclusion and chronicling of our journey with style and substance. My very special thanks to:

Ann Bezdek Weinheimer, whose courage in championing our unconventional approach launched us on our journey with confidence. During the study, Ann was our trailblazer and guide through the bureaucratic thickets. We benefited mightily from her detailed and hard-hitting critiques, her unwavering support for our efforts through the low moments and her praise at the high ones. Perhaps most of all, we treasure her belief in us and her infinite patience.

Joyce Bauchner, whose truly special ability moved us from abstract conception to earthly operation. Her commitment to task execution and consummate attention to detail served the study better than the best Master Sergeant. (Plus she's incredibly bright and doesn't smoke cigars.) Her formal titles and responsibilities belie the breadth and depth of her contribution to thinking up and working through this massive endeavor. As she remarked more than once, "Well, no one has ever done this before, but let's get on with it." And we did. My plans and our various teams' intentions, difficult as they were to arrive at, were just the first step. Seeing that they were carried out, by dispersed groups in six locations, on time and budget and in keeping with the overall conception was up to Joyce. Without her we'd still be picking up the stragglers and searching for the lost interview tape.

Susan Loucks, whose capacity for concentration, sustained high quality output and tolerance for my idiosyncracies is surpassed only by her unparalleled modesty, calm and good humor, is the single most important reason that the complex innovation of this study is represented through its master report series and numerous other publications. Individual authors have each made significant contributions in their own right. Weaving individual strands of reasoning into a coherent fabric that is both sturdy and stylish stands as the latest in a string of behind the scenes contributions that have been too often unacknowledged. Hers has been the longest and hardest race of all, because it's been run after the others have bedded down and the spectators have left the track. Had this been a race for the roses, the bouquet would belong to Susan.

Each has contributed in a special way to my realizing a major dream. From a field of exceptionally talented thoroughbreds, they have been a trio of true believers. Without these three, it wouldn't have happened; with them, I would try anything.

David P. Crandall, Ed. D.
Principal Investigator

SUMMARY: VOLUME VII

Volume VII focuses on dissemination and school improvement efforts at the state level, emphasizing the impact of federal dissemination initiatives on such efforts. The primary objectives of the volume are to:

- describe the dissemination and school improvement activities of the state education agencies in the ten-state sample of the Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement;
- describe how dissemination relates to school improvement activities in the different SEAs;
- analyze the impact of federal dissemination initiatives on SEA dissemination and school improvement efforts;
- discuss the influence of within-state factors on SEA dissemination and school improvement activities;
- introduce other factors affecting SEA school improvement programs;
- make recommendations for SEAs undertaking school improvement efforts; and
- make recommendations for federal policy in school improvement, especially with regard to state education agencies.

To address these objectives, the state education agencies in Arizona, California, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Virginia were studied. Using site report data, internal and external factors affecting each of the sample SEAs are analyzed at the local, state, and federal levels, using an adaptive systems model of the state education agency within its institutional environment.

Two patterns of SEA organizational behavior, maintenance and development, are applied to this adaptive systems model in order to examine the implications of these behavior patterns for state departments of education interested in attempting improvement efforts. Maintenance SEAs are characterized by relatively placid, undemanding political environments, strong traditions of localism, and tight constraints on resources; these agencies tend to attract leaders oriented toward quiet and efficient performance of basic SEA functions. Development SEAs, in contrast, are characterized by turbulent, demanding political environments, centralist or weak localist traditions, adequate resources, and have attracted activist executives.

Eight factors are used to analyze the organizational behavior of our ten SEAs. Within-state factors include:

- state sociopolitical climate and demographics, particularly attitudes toward education, government, and change;
- state wealth and the financing of education;
- actions of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government; and
- education organizations and interest groups outside the SEA.

Analyzed as SEA-related factors are:

- the chief state school officer;
- the organization of the SEA;
- the relationship between the SEA, LEAs, and Intermediate Units (if present); and
- relationships between the SEA and the federal government.

On the basis of these factors, four of our SEAs -- Maine, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Virginia -- exhibit maintenance patterns of behavior; the remaining six can be classified as development SEAs. None of the maintenance SEAs were engaged in statewide school improvement efforts at the time of our fieldwork. Of the development SEAs, some had developed objective-focused school improvement programs while others had created process-focused efforts. Some of these SEAs used dissemination as a tactic supporting their improvement efforts; others employed it as a generic improvement strategy.

Volume VII contains lengthy discussions of the dissemination and school improvement activities of each of the ten SEAs, classified by their pattern of organizational behavior. Development SEAs are further classified according to whether their approach to school improvement is objective- or process-focused and their use of dissemination is as a generic strategy or a supporting tactic. Implementation considerations for SEAs interested in developing school improvement programs are also presented and discussed as is the impact of the changing federal role on SEA-federal relationships.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION*

I. PURPOSE OF THE VOLUME

Having scrutinized dissemination and school improvement activities in state education agencies for some time now, the tendency is to view this volume as the rich sandwich filling between two slices of bread, those being on the one hand, the local site study detailed in Volumes II through IV of the Master Report Series, and on the other hand, the federal analyses included in Volumes V and VI. There is something to this view because state education agencies (SEAs) are truly "in the middle" -- they act as buffers, bridges, facilitators, and barriers between the national and local levels. In our Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement, SEAs were important intervening variables, being organizations that often promulgated their own school improvement and dissemination initiatives as well as administered federal dissemination programs.

A. What We Hope to Accomplish

Our goals in this volume proceed from the charge given to us at the beginning of the Dissemination Efforts Study. Using case study methodology, we were to describe the dissemination and school improvement efforts of the ten state education agencies in the study sample, with special emphasis on the impact of federal dissemination initiatives on those efforts. To carry out this mission, we felt the need as well to distinguish and describe within-state factors that influence SEA operations, including such things as sociopolitical culture, leadership style of the chief state school officer, and relations with local schools. From these analyses, we have gone on to describe the different types of school improvement programs that have resulted from these influences and speculated on the implications for other SEAs undertaking improvement activities. Finally, we have discussed the shift in federal-SEA relationships in the last few years and made recommendations for future federal action in school improvement.

In short, our objectives in this volume are to:

- describe the dissemination and school improvement activities of the ten state education agencies in the Dissemination Efforts Study sample;
- describe how dissemination relates to school improvement activities in the different SEAs;
- analyze the impact of federal dissemination initiatives on SEA dissemination and school improvement efforts;

*Very special thanks go to Glen Harvey, who edited this volume.

- discuss the influence of within-state factors on SEA dissemination and school improvement activities;
- introduce other factors affecting SEA school improvement programs;
- make recommendations for SEAs undertaking school improvement efforts; and
- make recommendations for federal policy in school improvement, especially with regard to state education agencies.

We will describe data collection elsewhere in this chapter, but want to indicate here at the start some of the limitations of the data. First of all, as anyone knows who has ventured inside the portals of a state education agency, even the smallest SEA is a very complex organization. Therefore, even the most comprehensive data collection effort is bound to oversimplify some things, distort others, and simply miss still others. Therefore, we do not claim that our site reports about ten SEAs represent the ultimate descriptions and analyses of state education agencies in the United States or even of the state agencies studied.

Moreover, state education agencies, even the most serene ones, are not steady-state entities. Because they bear the full brunt of ever-shifting political winds, SEAs are continually revising policy priorities and even organizational structure. So we regard our data on states as historical material, collected at one point in time and reflecting the issues and concerns of a particular era.

Nevertheless, the site reports have been very useful for analysis, illustrating the points we try to make in this volume. Even though the educational policy domain has been transformed in the years since our fieldwork, we feel that the insights of this volume are still valid.

In preparing this report, we have drawn heavily on the site reports, using excerpts from them where possible in order to give a sense of the rich diversity of improvement activity already occurring in states across the nation. If anything, the pace of those efforts has picked up -- albeit with much sparser funding -- in the decade of the 1980s. But then education in the United States has always mirrored the concerns of the society.

B. Relationship of Volume VII to Other Volumes in the Master Report Series

In the Dissemination Efforts Study, we attempted to examine dissemination from a number of perspectives, ranging from individual classrooms through schools, districts, and state agencies, to the federal agencies. Our hope was to put together a richly detailed picture of school improvement through dissemination.

Within the scheme of the Master Report Series, Volume VII is a critical layer in an elaborate Dagwood Special, in which disparate parts add up to more than their sum. As such, the volume focuses on the impact of federal programs in the ten states of our study sample and looks at how federal programs in the SEA are or are not incorporated in state school improvement efforts. The story of the federal programs themselves is told in three other volumes of the Master Report Series. Volume I, Setting the Stage for a Study of School Improvement, relates the evolution of the federal role in dissemination for school improvement; Volume V, Dissemination for School Improvement: An Analysis of Nine Federal Education Programs, includes profiles of nine widely different federal education programs sponsored by the Office of Education; and Volume VI, Dissemination at the National Institute of Education: Contending Ideas about Research, Practice, and the Federal Role, focuses on six dissemination programs supported by the National Institute of Education (NIE). Because these volumes and other recent studies (e.g., Royster et al., 1981) have recounted in some detail the history of federal efforts, we will limit our background section to a brief summary of federal-state relationships in educational dissemination.

C. Background: A Brief History of Federal and State Roles in Dissemination and School Improvement

1. History of the Federal Role

Although the federal government through the Office of Education (USOE) has historically had a dissemination function in education matters (Warren, 1974), it is commonly accepted that the modern era of federal dissemination authority began with the National Defense Education Act of 1958. In Title VII-B of that act, USOE was authorized to "disseminate information concerning new educational media" to SEAs, local education agencies (LEAs), and institutions of higher education (IHEs). Such information might include studies of the need for new instructional media, along with catalogues, reviews, and other types of analysis products that might encourage use of new instructional media. It might also mean provision of advice and/or technical assistance to agencies attempting to use such media. One can see that even at this point in time, language that implied change -- i.e., "encourage use" -- was present. This act was also the impetus for the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and for the network of regional laboratories.

More dissemination activities were added with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965. In fact, by the time the Interstate Project on Dissemination (IPOD) made a census of federal dissemination initiatives in 1975, the committee counted 208 separate federal dissemination requirements with 58 agencies responsible for monitoring compliance with the requirements.

We will not describe the individual dissemination activities of the different Title programs in the Office of Education, but refer the reader to companion volumes in this report series, particularly Volumes I and V, and to supporting documents such as the overview by Hellmer, Harris, and Thompson (1981).

Finally, the Education Amendments of 1972 assigned major responsibilities for generic dissemination activities to the newly established National Institute of Education. NIE took over the functions of the National Center for Educational Communications and the in-person dissemination programs as well, leaving the Office of Education with responsibility for dissemination through the categorical programs. However, this meant that the Office of Education still had responsibility for extensive, albeit uncoordinated, dissemination activities, such as the Handicapped Children's Early Education Program, Title IV-C, and vocational education. In fact, the efforts of subsequent federal strategies to promote coordination at the SEA level were not to be mirrored at the federal level, where dissemination functions continue to be distributed among many actors.

The federal government has supported dissemination activities within two major thrusts: information strategies and interpersonal strategies. As we shall see, the IPOD committee distinguished between these two in their discussion of the evolution of the dissemination concept. State education agencies were to be affected by both types of activities as NIE dissemination activities came increasingly to focus on SEAs as the major intermediary/conduit between national and local levels.

While the information strategy concentrated on developing information resources such as the ERIC system, particularly in SEAs, the interpersonal strategy focused increasingly on fostering dissemination assistance capacity within state education agencies themselves. The first in a series of programs was the Pilot State Dissemination Grants Program, which from 1970 to 1972 provided grants to SEAs in three states to implement a model which emphasized full-time external facilitators working with schools and a bank of state information resources, including ERIC (Sieber et al., 1972). This successful project was followed by grants to seven other states, including intermediate agencies in two of our study states (Pennsylvania and California), to implement variations of the Pilot State Model. These were usually somewhat more modest efforts, employing part-time external facilitators.

These efforts indicated to both NIE and SEAs that individual states could establish useful systems for dissemination of research and other information resources.

2. History of the State Role

As early as 1969, SEAs such as Michigan were developing dissemination capabilities in their states. By 1974, there was interest on the part of several SEAs in exploring further the

creation of generalized dissemination systems. These states, chafing at the multiple requirements for dissemination handed down from the federal level, saw possibilities for more coordinated, meta-categorical approaches. From interactions between NIE and interested SEAs came the Interstate Project on Dissemination, designed to conduct an analysis of SEA perspectives on issues relevant to federal-state dissemination roles. In their report and recommendations volume, published in 1976, the IPOD group emphasized the historical fragmentation among dissemination activities that had arisen over time and called for coordinated, integrated systems to be created within each SEA (Interstate Project on Dissemination, 1976). This report was one of the major influences in the creation of NIE's capacity building strategy, which focused exclusively on SEAs.

As we shall see in this volume, not all SEAs were in fact ready or able to create coordinated dissemination systems or actively assist local schools. The variation in SEA patterns of behavior serves as a reminder of the evolution of state education agencies in the United States.

There was a time when most SEAs were small organizations concerned almost exclusively with administration -- counting and keeping track of the number of schools, teachers, and so on -- and regulation -- making sure schools were open and staffed, etc. Some SEAs have always been more involved with local education matters than this, even to the point of assisting local schools, but these agencies were the exception rather than the rule.

In most states, the gradual shift to a more active posture began with the passage of ESEA in 1965, although Michigan, for example, had reworked the role of its SEA with the revision of the state constitution in 1963. The states' role in the many categorical programs that arose was largely regulatory, to be sure, but for many SEAs such programs offered a first foot in the door of local schools.

Over the last nearly twenty years, then, the right of SEAs to intervene in local education matters has been steadily expanded, although not without conflict. In the work of the categorical programs, some technical assistance has been provided. For example, if a Title I program in a local district was not adequate, SEA personnel might not only point out deficiencies but also suggest ways to correct them; other school districts with good programs might be mentioned as models, thereby creating an informal dissemination process. But such aid was always offered within the framework of a particular program.

Once the notion of SEA intervention in schools -- albeit to monitor and regulate -- had been accepted or at least tolerated, the concept of generic service (i.e., not tied to particular categorical programs) to school districts was possible -- at least logically. However, service is fundamentally different from regulation. The former implies nonjudgmental help available to

all schools desiring it, while most regulatory activities flow from the states' authority and initiative. Further, regulation involves only a few schools -- the non-compliers. When service is the goal, the person-power and financial resources of the SEA are called into question.

The first service-oriented and the first meta-categorical efforts of SEAs involved dissemination. What was dissemination initially and how has the concept shifted? According to the Report of the Interstate Project on Dissemination (IPOD) in 1976, "examining definitions (of dissemination) in light of their time of origin indicates that earlier definitions are more likely to be restricted to flow-of-information, while more recent ones, with some exceptions, include activities designed to bring about change" (p. 1). The committee also noted that

> usage now appears to have established two concepts of dissemination. In the narrower sense, dissemination has been limited to the traditional, one-way-flow-of-information concept. Dissemination activities developed by those holding this view have been perceived as primarily designed to create awareness of and interest in new programs and products. In its broader sense, dissemination has been used to include activities usually associated with diffusion and implementation of new practices -- such as providing technical assistance with emphasis on developing two-way communication. (p. 1)

SEAs in our study sample differ in which view of dissemination they have embraced; indeed, different divisions within an SEA have adopted different stances regarding dissemination.

Finally, as we will detail in the rest of the volume, a growing number of states have launched school improvement efforts. In many cases, these have remained categorically-tied initiatives. However, several states have made the attempt to coordinate their activities across SEA intra-organizational boundaries, in some instances going so far as to reorganize SEA divisions themselves. What exactly is a "school improvement" effort and how does it differ from dissemination? Because of the shift in the meaning of dissemination as used by many federal and state actors to be change-oriented and to include technical assistance for implementation, the two concepts overlap considerably. While some SEAs would claim that theirs is not a dissemination-based school improvement effort, we have concluded that all change processes involve the transference (or dissemination) of something new, whether it be an idea, a set of specified behaviors, or a product.

Having now examined a range of dissemination activities that shaded into school improvement activities and vice-versa, we have concluded that there has been a name change to suit the new times, for several reasons. SEAs bound by localist traditions, for example, have found that "dissemination" and "innovation" are

suspect terms -- they sound "federal," one respondent indicated. In such settings, "school improvement" is an acceptable euphemism. More generally, in a time when top-down directiveness is being reexamined, "school improvement" is preferred over "change" or even "dissemination," both of which suggest that local schools are targets that have somehow been found wanting, rather than ones who are eager and willing to improve themselves.

3. Events in Dissemination in the Late 1970s

In 1975 the first grants under the State Dissemination Grants Program were made to a group of SEAs, including Illinois, one of our ten sample states. Commonly called the State Capacity Building Program (SCBP), its goals were to (1) develop a system to extend information resources to local educators through in-person assistance (i.e., linking agents) and (2) coordinate diverse dissemination activities at the state level. The program was based on an assumption that state agencies may be closer to local schools, and therefore better able to deliver new information, ideas, and programs than federal agencies. After the first set of state agencies was funded, four successive cohorts followed every year through 1979. When the State Capacity Building Program ended, only nine states had not participated, among them, Virginia, one of our study states. Meanwhile, federal-state dialogue concerning dissemination continued. A Dissemination Policy Council was created, comprised of representatives from both USOE and NIE. In 1976, the council appointed twelve specialists from federal, state, and non-governmental organizations to the Dissemination Analysis Group (DAG). Its report reiterated the need for coordination and consistency in dissemination activities expressed by IPOD. The DAG's definition of dissemination included four elements: spread, exchange, choice, and implementation (DAG, 1977).

The Research and Development Utilization Program (RDU) also began in 1976. This NIE-sponsored program sought to combine the concepts of interpersonal linkage, problem-solving for capacity-building at the local school level, and the use of products resulting from research and development. The SEAs in two of our sample states, Pennsylvania and Michigan, participated in the RDU program; a third state, California, was served by an RDU project.

The first and second National Dissemination Forums were held in 1977 and 1978. The pace quickened between the two: the first one was organized by 5 dissemination programs in USOE and NIE and attracted 200 dissemination specialists; a total of 29 USOE and NIE dissemination programs orchestrated the second, attended by 1,000 dissemination activists. Participants at the forums highlighted a variety of issues, ranging from the quality of what is disseminated to the proper mix of proactivity and reactivity in a service system.

There were also many other activities, too numerous to mention here. It was the goal of the Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement to examine the fruits of all the labor in the area of dissemination, to see if the energy expended at the federal level had any impact on life in state and local agencies. Our judgment is that it has. In many ways, the 1970s were the heyday of interest in and funds for dissemination. In the 1980s, the interest continues unabated, but funding at all levels is much harder to come by and the effects of consolidation remain to be seen. But a start, at least, has been made.

II. DATA COLLECTION APPROACH

A. The Ten States in the Sample

The ten sample states of the Study of Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement were chosen to be representative of the continental 48 states on several selected dimensions:

- total number of students,
- per-pupil expenditures,
- percentage of students in urban districts,
- number of students per district,
- number of federally supported centers (teacher centers, special education centers, and general education centers),
- ratio of U.S. Office of Education funds to number of students,
- attendance at the 1978 Dissemination Forum, i.e., the number of participants from a given state who attended the most recent national conference on dissemination (a surrogate for active dissemination capacity within the state), and
- whether the chief state school officer is elected or appointed (a surrogate measure for political diversity).

We considered these variables to be especially relevant to the organization of school resources, to policy considerations, and to within-state dissemination activities.

To select the ten states, we used a computer program (Morris, 1975) that randomly divided the 48 continental states into a ten-state sample group and a 38-state non-sample group that were as similar as possible with respect to their means and standard deviations on the dimensions mentioned above. When the program generated several such ten-state sample groups, we selected the one that contained states to which travel for our study teams would be most convenient and least expensive.

The states we selected were:

- Arizona
- California
- Illinois
- Maine
- Maryland
- Michigan

- Nebraska
- Pennsylvania
- South Dakota
- Virginia

As we explained, these states were selected to range on the dimension of within-state dissemination capacity, and they are indeed diverse. For example, of the participants at the 1978 Dissemination Forum, 26 came from Pennsylvania in contrast to 1 each from Maine and South Dakota.

The states also vary in their participation in NIE's State Capacity Building Program (SCBP). Illinois was in the first cohort of ten states funded in 1975; Virginia never participated in the program although it did receive a Special Purpose Grant Award in 1976. Of the others, California and Michigan were among the 14 states funded in Cohort II (1976); Arizona and Nebraska joined a group of six states in Cohort III (1977); Maryland and Pennsylvania were members of a cohort of four funded in 1978. Finally, Maine and South Dakota were among ten states in the fifth and last cohort, funded in late 1979 (their activities are not discussed in this volume which is based on data collected in 1979-80).

Our efforts to select schools that had implemented practices from the four programs under study -- state-administered dissemination programs, Title IV-C Local Development Program, the National Diffusion Network (including Title I), and the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped's Marketing Program -- had different levels of success in different states for different reasons.

State-Administered Dissemination Programs. The selection of a state-administered sample was complicated by the lack of a single source of information about dissemination of practices within the ten states. Each state had its own system for funding and tracking dissemination; this meant dealing with ten separate state departments in order to gather the information needed for sampling. In addition, the format, detail, and accuracy of the information varied from state to state.

The initial source of information for sampling was the state Title IV-C coordinator. In the first round of telephone calls, we learned that Maryland and Maine did not have dissemination efforts which fit our criterion of transferring a practice from one school to another. All other state coordinators were asked to send descriptions of practices they had funded for dissemination, and a description of any information they had concerning adopting school districts. Any practices which did not focus on the direct delivery of services to students were eliminated. The application of this criterion eliminated South Dakota from the states included in the state-administered sample. Arizona is also not included. Thus, we were able to select sites in six of the ten sample states for a total of 31 state-administered program sites.

Title IV-C Local Development Program. Using documents furnished by Title IV-C coordinators in the ten states, we listed in random order all sites that had received Title IV-C development grants, along with the year of their funding and the name of their state. We were unable to find any sites in South Dakota that met our criteria, so the 24 Title IV-C locally developed project sites are distributed among nine states.

National Diffusion Network (non-Title I). All NDN practices with very low adoption rates were eliminated from sampling consideration; these accounted for nearly one-third of the projects. Each of the remaining practices was classified as having a high (above 100), medium (between 26 and 100), or low (below 26) overall frequency of adoption.

We then sampled randomly across the ten states. Nebraska and Virginia each had only one site; Virginia's lone site was a Title I NDN school and became part of the NDN Title I sample, leaving nine states with 48 sites as the NDN non-Title I sample.

NDN Title I. Seven Title I practices were eligible for sampling across the ten states -- three were part of the original NDN sample and four were added when Title I program officers decided they wanted to participate in the study. The criteria for selection included validation by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel (JDRP) and NDN funding for dissemination. An eighth practice was eliminated from further consideration because the only adopting schools were in the state in which it had been developed, making it more like a state-administered practice.

The adoptions of these seven practices were listed by state in random order and sampled accordingly. There were no NDN Title I sites chosen in Maine, Nebraska, and South Dakota, so the 26 schools in the NDN Title I sample are distributed among the seven remaining states.

Bureau of Education for the Handicapped Marketing Program. We had great difficulty finding a sample of sites that were actually using BEH products. Of the 17 we finally verified, none were in Illinois or South Dakota.

Table 1 presents the number of sites selected in each state by program. Note that the sample contains:

- State-Administered Dissemination sites in six states (none in Arizona, Maine, Maryland, South Dakota);
- Title I NDN sites in seven states (none in Maine, Nebraska, South Dakota);
- Non-Title I NDN sites in nine states (none in Virginia);
- BEH sites in eight states (none in Illinois and South Dakota); and
- Title IV-C Local Development sites in nine states (none in South Dakota).

Table 1: Distribution of Sites Among Programs By States

	NDN		BEH	State-Administered	Local Title IV-C Development	Totals by State
	Non-Title I	Title I				
Arizona	1	1	1	0	2	5 (3.4%)
California	3	2	3	6	5	19 (13.0%)
Illinois	13	2	0	7	3	25 (17.1%)
Maine	11	0	1	0	3	15 (10.3%)
Maryland	1	1	2	0	2	6 (4.1%)
Michigan	5	13	2	7	3	30 (20.5%)
Nebraska	1	0	1	4	1	7 (4.8%)
Pennsylvania	8	5	2	3	3	21 (14.4%)
South Dakota	5	0	0	0	0	5 (3.4%)
Virginia	0	2	5	4	2	13 (8.9%)
TOTALS BY PROGRAM	48 (32.9%)	26 (17.8%)	17 (11.6%)	31 (21.2%)	24 (16.4%)	146 (100%)

The number of schools visited per state ranged from five (in Arizona and South Dakota) to 30 (in Michigan where a high of 18 NDN sites were visited) and averaged 14.6 schools visited per state. This distribution is a function of sampling parameters noted earlier, the availability of information concerning the schools in a particular state, and the state education agency's involvement with certain federal programs. It also is a function of the numbers of schools in each of these states.

As we will try to show in this volume, there is a rough correlation between the number of programs and sites and the level of dissemination activity in the states. South Dakota, for example, was one of the least active states at the time of the study, and has no sites in four of the five program areas; Maryland and Arizona, both recently active, have rather few entries. For other states, the distribution of sites is skewed: Maine and Illinois, for example, have very active NDN State Facilitator projects; and Michigan has been active in Title I. California, Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, and Virginia have developed in-state dissemination programs; the others have not.

B. Data Collection

Site visits to the ten states in the study sample began in the Fall of 1979 and were completed in the early Spring of 1980. One field researcher traveled to all but the four largest states; a team of two visited California, Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. The number of person days per site ranged from 4 to 12. More than 150 interviews were conducted with key informants; the number per state ranged from 12 to 24.

Illinois was selected as a pilot case and the topic guide and field procedures were reviewed and modified after its completion. To structure the general line of questioning, each researcher used a topic guide while conducting interviews; field notes were coded and systematic site reports were developed for each state. Glenn Shive and Alan Doyle authored the reports on Illinois and Maryland; Renee Lerche wrote the profiles of Arizona, Maine, Pennsylvania; Michael Mayo crafted the studies of Michigan, Nebraska, and South Dakota; Wendy Gelberg formulated the site report on Virginia. The California site report was co-authored by Lerche and Mayo.

III. ORDER OF THE VOLUME

Volume VII is organized in seven chapters. In Part I of this introductory chapter, we laid out the purpose of this report, describing the goals it is meant to achieve, its relationship to the rest of the master report series, and a brief history of federal and state roles in dissemination. In Part II, we detailed our approach to sampling and data collection.

In this section, we outline the rest of the volume. Chapter 2 lays out our conceptual approach to the study of state education agencies and presents a model of the SEA in its institutional environment. It also introduces the concepts of maintenance and development as two patterns of organizational behavior for SEAs. It concludes with a discussion of eight factors or influences that differentiate the two types of organizational responses.

Chapter 3 draws from our ten case studies to profile the four maintenance SEAs and six development SEAs in the sample. There is an analysis of each SEA according to the eight factors introduced in Chapter 2 in a way that we trust captures the rich variation among the agencies in our sample. This analysis of the influences on dissemination and school improvement sets the stage for Chapters 4 and 5, which detail the range of strategies for dissemination and school improvement developed by the ten state agencies.

Chapter 4 offers a typology of school improvement and dissemination strategies and activities that categorize the ten SEAs we studied. The maintenance SEAs in our sample had no statewide school improvement activities at the time of our field work, so our focus on them was to look at categorical dissemination efforts. The development SEAs varied on at least two dimensions: some had formulated objective-focused school improvement programs; others had created process-focused efforts. Some had used dissemination as a supporting tactic; others had employed it as a generic strategy to effect improvement in local schools.

Following the typology, Chapter 4 then takes up the dissemination stories of Nebraska, South Dakota, Maine, and Virginia, the maintenance SEAs in our sample. While their spheres of action are much more constrained than those of fellow SEAs that have adopted the development pattern of behavior, the maintenance SEAs are nevertheless undertaking some interesting dissemination activities. They illustrate that there is more than one way to foster school improvement in local schools. Chapter 4 concludes with a section on the implications of the maintenance pattern for SEA activity in school improvement.

Chapter 5 follows with the sagas of the more involved strategies and activities of the development SEAs. First, the school improvement efforts in objective-focused SEAs -- Maryland, Michigan, and Arizona -- are detailed; then the programs of process-focused SEAs -- California, Illinois and Pennsylvania -- are outlined. In Part II, dissemination in these SEAs is discussed: as a supporting tactic in Maryland, California, and Arizona; and as a generic strategy in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Michigan.

Chapter 6 shifts the focus of discussion to quite another view of the school improvement efforts in SEAs, particularly the development agencies. Here we look at school improvement programs as innovations requiring implementation at the SEA level itself as well as in local schools. Drawing from earlier research and from other components of the Dissemination Efforts Study, we present several considerations for SEAs developing school improvement programs ranging from time of inception and nature of the problem to stage of program implementation and outcomes. While this discussion is something of a post-hoc analysis because we did not set out to collect information on implementation factors, we nevertheless think that these issues made enough difference in our SEA sample to merit examination. Chapter 6 concludes with recommendations for SEAs undertaking school improvement programs.

The seventh and final chapter of the volume examines the impact of consolidation and the waning federal role in education on SEA-federal relationships. Part I talks about school improvement and the impact of federal dissemination strategies on SEAs, specifically the State Capacity Building Program, the National Diffusion Network, and the Title IV-C Local Development Program. Part II looks at school improvement and the new intergovernmental system, exploring what the federal role in school improvement might be in the next few years.

CHAPTER 2:

A MODEL OF THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY IN ITS INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

I. APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF SEAs

To understand the manner and extent to which federal dissemination activities have been integrated into the school improvement efforts launched by state education agencies requires far more than an examination of the relationship between SEAs and the federal government. Federal factors are only one of many types of influences affecting SEAs. Numerous other factors, both internal and external to the SEA, also greatly affect the ways in which SEAs integrate dissemination activities into their school improvement efforts. Within-state factors such as state wealth and financing of education, for example, are in many respects more prominent and tend to have more overall impact on the orientation and behavior of SEAs than do federal factors.

The thesis of this volume is that the shift in the pattern and intensity of these influences upon the SEA over the last ten to fifteen years underlies the search for more comprehensive, integrated program strategies for school improvement on the part of some SEAs. To test this thesis, we first needed to know <u>what</u> the states were doing in dissemination, and we needed to understand <u>why</u> they had selected these dissemination activities. That is, we were interested both in developing portraits of actual SEA dissemination activities and in gaining insight into the variety of interactive factors which influence the development and promotion of these activities.

We took a broad view of this task for two reasons. <u>First</u>, SEAs differed in their definitions of "dissemination." Within our ten state sample, we found that state policymakers viewed dissemination in a variety of ways. For example:

- Some saw it as a generic strategy for improving schools, and built a new system, or converted an old one, to transmit useful information to LEAs. Others had doubts about dissemination, and saw it as playing at most a supporting role in the implementation of state initiatives.

- Some viewed dissemination as the proactive diffusion of validated models derived from exemplary local practices; others had a dominant image of dissemination as computer-assisted information retrieval services.

- Some believed that controlling the quality of what is disseminated was not a major issue, maintaining that we should "put it all into the system and let the locals decide." Others contended that "if the stuff isn't both sound and relevant" to locals, they won't bother to use the service a "second time."

- Some considered that state dissemination personnel should act as "content specialists;" others suggested that "process generalist" was a more appropriate role.

- Some saw the need to build greater in-house service capabilities. Others, reacting to limitations on the number of staff who could be hired and the general resource crunch, were more attracted by a slimmer brokerage role which puts schools in touch with consultants and services located outside the state agency, hence, the emergence of human resource files.

- Some saw dissemination as something new being pushed by the federal government, while a few perceived themselves to be "ahead of the fed on this one."

Second, the way an SEA organized for dissemination could not initially be separated from fundamental issues about its overall mission, organizational structure, and relationship to its constituencies and publics. Understanding these issues for the organization as a whole was an essential step toward explaining its response to federal initiatives in dissemination.

To achieve this understanding of the SEA in its organizational context required the identification and examination of a variety of interactive internal and external factors which influence the agency and its approach to school improvement and dissemination. To ensure that the data necessary for such analyses were collected, we constructed a model depicting the interactions of external and internal factors with the SEA and their impact on school improvement in general, and dissemination in particular. This model is described in more detail in the following section.

In our collection of data concerning external factors affecting SEAs, we focused on three sources of external influence: the state political system, of which the SEA is a part; local school districts, which sometimes interact with the SEA through intermediate service units; and the federal government. At all three levels, our focus was on the relationship between the SEA and these sources of influence, from the perspective of the SEA itself.

At the state level, we focused on salient aspects of the SEA's relationship to (1) the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of state government, and (2) education interest groups such as teachers' unions, administrators' associations, and lobbies for special interests, e.g., the handicapped, sex equity, and civil rights. Emphasis was placed on examining key events, such as the passage of an accountability law, and structural changes in the equations of power, such as the increasing number and sophistication of legislative staffs in state assemblies.

In SEA-LEA relations, we looked for the traditional pattern of reconciling local control and state responsibility for education. In addition, five of our states had intermediate units (IUs) of different kinds which mediated between the SEAs and LEAs; the other five had none. An effort was made to sketch their place, or the absence of one, into the overall picture of school improvement policy in the SEA. Connections between an SEA's school improvement efforts and higher education or the private sector provided an additional focus of attention at the local level, although relationships of this type appeared to be rare.

We included both a broad and narrow focus at the federal level. The overall relationship of SEAs to the federal government provided the larger and more general focus. This was then narrowed to probe specific federally-sponsored dissemination activities, particularly Title IV-C, the State Facilitator Project of the National Diffusion Network, and the NIE State Dissemination Capacity Building project. Also explored were the ways in which SEAs spent their Title V (State Strengthening) and inservice education money, two of the few sources of discretionary funds available to state agencies at the time of our fieldwork.

Moving from the outside in, we examined the factors internal to the SEA which influenced its school improvement efforts and the role dissemination played in such activities. The structure and management of the SEA provided the primary focus of this examination. For example, attempts to reorganize were documented, as were initiatives that came with new chief state school officers (CSSOs). (Six of our ten states changed chiefs just before or during our field research.) Leadership styles, decision-making patterns, channels of communication, and control mechanisms were scrutinized and compared. Some SEAs, for example, had more formalized systems of organizational communication, whereas others relied more heavily on informal, often traditional channels for transmitting information up and down the bureaucracy. We also inquired generally about the "facts of life" regarding civil service, employee unions, salary levels, and career patterns. Finally, we consciously tried to build impressions across interviews about more intangible factors such as morale, anticipations for the future, and the extent to which key staff shared a common image of the organization and its mission.

These external and internal factors dynamically interact over time to produce policies and programs -- or the absence thereof -- which address the improvement needs of local districts. As it turned out, six of our states had launched a major school improvement initiative which involved both structural change in the SEA and coordinated adaptation of federal dissemination activities. The other four SEAs did not have cross-categorical, state-administered program initiatives. To the extent that these SEAs engaged in dissemination of any type, they did so within an organizational structure which mirrored the federal programs supplying the funds and the regulations governing their expenditure.

II. MODEL OF THE SEA IN ITS INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

As implied in the above discussion, to understand how state education agencies have responded to federal dissemination and school improvement initiatives, it is essential to view SEAs as organizations in their own right, with problems, priorities, and programs of their own -- not as mere instruments for implementing federal policies. Federal initiatives must contend for influence with a variety of forces in the SEA's immediate institutional environment within the state and with important factors within the agency itself. The influence and efficacy of federal policies depend crucially upon the match between these policies and the orientation of each SEA.

To gain a deeper understanding of the SEAs we studied, we adopted an adaptive systems model of the state education agency in its environment (Wirt & Kirst, 1972). According to this model, state education agencies pursue political, bureaucratic, and substantive goals within an institutional environment that both supplies resources and imposes constraints. In pursuing their various goals, SEAs generally try to maximize resources while minimizing constraints on their allocation and use.

From the federal government, SEAs get money and rules for spending it. Indeed, the current size of many SEAs may be attributed in large measure to the influx of federal dollars that began with ESEA in 1965. SEAs dispense federal dollars to local districts, and enforce federal rules for using those dollars. Parts of some SEAs have become virtual extensions of the federal government. Other SEAs are more clearly state level agencies, and negotiate agreements with the federal government to perform specific services in the framework of their own priorities and procedures. Historically and constitutionally, SEAs precede the recent federal activism in education. However, they have been so transformed by participation in that activism that few could return to the quiet days before ESEA.

In the state political systems of which they are a part, SEAs negotiate with legislatures, governors' offices, courts, and a variety of education interest groups and organizations to secure the greatest support in exchange for the fewest constraints. The overall level of fiscal support they receive, and the breadth of discretion they have to spend it, are critical determinants of SEA policy behavior. Some SEAs are given substantial resources by their state legislators, but are expected to do a great deal with it. Other SEAs are given little, and are expected to do little in their dealings with local districts. The chiefs of SEAs would probably argue that expectations and constraints placed on SEAs have been rising faster than the state-level resources allocated to fulfill them.

Finally, from local school districts, SEAs receive demands for fiscal support and requests for technical assistance to comply with state and federal laws and regulations. Local districts are the major clients or constituents of SEAs. The political traditions of a state regarding the optimal balance between local autonomy and SEA leadership set important unofficial limits upon permissible action by the SEA. That point of optimal balance may shift to one side or the other depending on changes in the educational climate within the state.

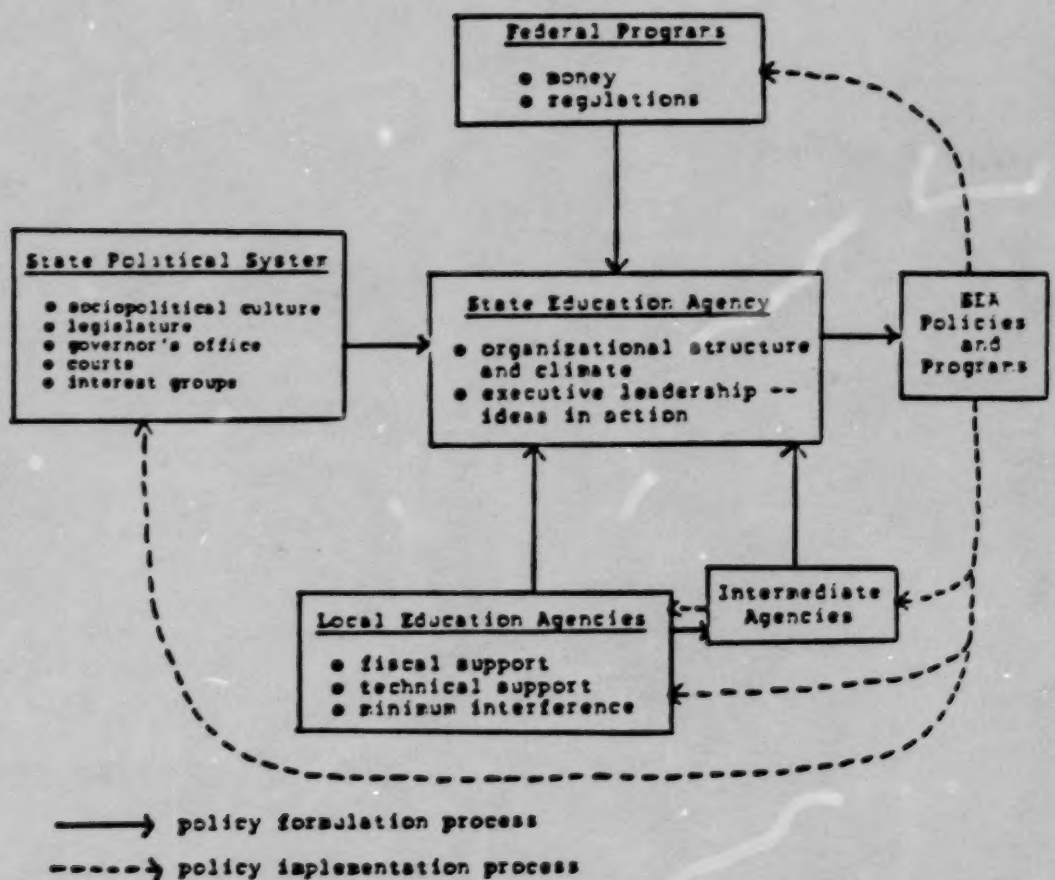
Figure I depicts these external (federal, state, local) sources of constraints and resources as they converge upon the SEA. Also portrayed in this adaptive systems model of the SEA are two critical internal factors which, in interaction with external factors, have a significant impact on the policy and program responses of the SEA. These include the organizational structure of the agency and the degree of policy activism exhibited by the executive leadership.

Since the era of ESEA began in 1965, the organizational structure of state education agencies has tended to reflect the structure of federal categorical programs. That is, there has been a tendency to structure SEAs like "picket fences," with the strongest lines of force following the money from federal sources through the SEA to local recipients. Most SEAs added individual offices incrementally to their structure as federal legislation created new programs to address specific national priorities for school improvement.

The limited coordination among bureaus and programs in Washington has frequently been repeated by limited coordination among their counterparts in state education agencies. With their "own" budgets and regulations from Washington, state directors of federal programs could usually operate with considerable autonomy within their SEAs. Through statewide conferences and monthly newsletters, they could build informal networks with their administrative counterparts in the central offices of local districts. Many states used their ESEA Title V State Strengthening money to hire specialists in subject areas, many of whom rode the workshop circuits to schools around the state. Through these growing networks of specialist-to-specialist communication, the pickets in the federal fence extended vertically from Washington through state and intermediate agencies into local district offices.

During the 1970s, new pressures came to bear on SEAs from state and local sources, creating new and delicate administrative tasks for SEAs. Primary among these pressures have been diminishing public confidence, legislative demands for increased accountability in general and for minimum competency testing in particular, declining enrollments, school consolidation, collective bargaining, eroding tax bases, and increasing pressures to equalize state funding formulas. Although resources and constraints from the federal level encouraged a picket fence

Figure 1: A Model of the State Education Agency in its Institutional Environment



organizational structure, many of these new problems with which SEAs have had to grapple in the past decade have "fallen on the bias" of this picket fence structure.

The constraints impinging on SEAs from state and local sources have sharpened in tenacity and complexity. The structures and standard procedures resulting from the multiplicity of separate federal programs, each with its own set of regulations, have often proved inappropriate for dealing with these new state and local problems. This has prompted the more assertive chiefs to search for new structural arrangements which will allow their agencies to respond more directly to the problems they face.

This pressure against the pickets has aggravated the relationships between the more activist state leaders and federal program managers. They argue for a new version of "states rights," not as a cover for ideological opposition to the goals of federal programs, but as a means of gaining greater discretion to design the administrative strategies for implementing them.

Pressures to both weaken and strengthen the pickets converge on the SEA in conjunction with a variety of other influences from state, local, and federal sources. In response, the SEA develops a school improvement strategy to deal with these influences. The strategy is then implemented in some form of program activity, producing outcomes throughout the system. These, in turn, contribute new influences for the SEA to deal with.

While several SEAs have become initiators of school improvement efforts, it is vital to remember that they are creatures of their institutional context, not free agents. The influences which converge upon them have major effects on the policies and programs they develop; and as the cycle described in the previous paragraph perpetuates itself, these influences continue to have a significant impact. In each one of our case studies, the actions of the CSSO and SEA were constrained by state, local, and federal factors. Activist chiefs turned constraints and opportunities to their own ends, but the dominant image of such a CSSO remained one of a skillful and inspired lead spiker on a volleyball team -- there was a lot of commotion, many other players were on the court, and the ball was in the air a lot of the time.

To fully understand the complex interactions which affect the SEA's use of dissemination in school improvement efforts required deciphering the underlying order or logic in this commotion. We needed to identify the other players, learn their positions and skills, and understand how they affected the game. And we needed to understand what was happening to the ball when it was in the air -- and when it wasn't. As a first step in this deciphering process, we began by examining the organizational behavior of the SEAs and its relationship to the factors identified or implied in our systems model depicted in Figure 1. This preliminary analysis of SEA organizational behavior was then used to provide the framework for the remainder of our analyses.

III. MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT AS TWO PATTERNS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR FOR SEAs

Depending upon such factors as the severity of the within-state problems they confront, the strength of localist traditions, and the level of available resources, chief state school officers and their leadership teams have tended to establish one of two patterns of organizational behavior for their agencies: maintenance or development (Berman & McLaughlin, 1979).

Many state education agencies are characterized by relatively placid, undemanding political environments, by strong traditions of localism, and by tight constraints on resources. These SEAs have tended to attract leaders oriented toward quiet and efficient performance of basic SEA functions, including the administration of federal programs. Preserving harmony -- with local districts, the federal government, and within the agency -- is a high priority. If these leaders have a quarrel with the federal government, it is because federal regulations require them to intrude upon local affairs more than they can afford to, either economically or politically. They tend to accept the picket fence structure, but soft-pedal enforcement of politically troublesome regulations. Because these agencies appear oriented primarily to preservation of political equilibrium and bureaucratic functioning, we have referred to their characteristic mode of adaptation to the environment as maintenance.

In contrast, SEAs characterized by turbulent, demanding political environments, centralist or weak localist traditions, and adequate, if not abundant, resources have attracted activist executives who chafe against the picket fence. To address the substantive and political problems they confront, these leaders show a willingness to fight or circumvent federal regulations and to disrupt the bureaucratic empires and routines established by managers of federal categorical programs within their agencies. Many of these activist leaders have developed a central school improvement initiative of their own and have coordinated resources and functions from across the agency to support it. We have referred to this mode of organizational adaptation to the environment as development.

The key difference between agencies evincing a development mode of behavior and maintenance-oriented agencies is the way they mix and reconcile their political, bureaucratic, and substantive goals. Both maintenance and development agencies pursue these three types of goals. They both engage in rhetorical flourishes in the press, soothe aroused legislators and interest groups, negotiate with aggrieved local superintendents, and constantly try to strike a balance among budgets and turf claims within their agencies. However, the two kinds of SEAs differ in the ways they reconcile these bureaucratic and political goals with their substantive goals. By substantive goals, we refer to such matters as delivering services to school districts, assuring that high school graduates achieve at least minimal standards of competency, improving basic skills achievement among students from poor and

minority groups, and providing special programs for the handicapped, pre-school children, or the gifted and talented. In maintenance agencies, political and bureaucratic considerations sharply constrain the actions that may be taken to achieve service delivery (substantive) goals. In development agencies, the leadership pursues a mixture of political and substantive goals, with bureaucratic considerations viewed as merely a means to those ends. Development leaders will accept some level of disturbance within their agencies as the inevitable price of responding to new demands on the SEA from its institutional environment. Maintenance leaders, on the other hand, prefer to preserve the status quo and avoid activities which disrupt the agencies' routines.

This view of maintenance and development leadership in SEAs parallels Burns and Buckley's (1976) concepts of transactional and transforming leadership. The objective for transactional or maintenance leaders is to manage exchanges and strike bargains that satisfy the interests of separate groups, each going its own way. The transactional leader is something like an arbitrator of bureaucratic commerce. In contrast, the objective for transforming or development leaders is to unify the separate interests of groups and individuals in the pursuit of "higher" goals which serve the greater collective interest. The key to the difference is the relationship between organizational means and normative ends. The leaders of development SEAs tend to emphasize the end-values of school improvement, e.g., equal opportunity or educational quality, and try to orient the various operations of the SEA to contribute to the common mission. The leaders of maintenance SEAs tend to emphasize the importance of organizational methods, approaches, and routines in order to preserve the structure and operation of the existing agency.

We hypothesized that the ten states in our sample could be categorized according to these two patterns of SEA organizational behavior. Our ultimate intention was to consider what these patterns of behavior might mean for state departments of education that want to engage in change efforts. To do this, we began by integrating our adaptive systems model of the SEA (discussed in the previous section) with the theoretical notions of development and maintenance states.

Development and maintenance patterns of SEA organizational behavior were differentiated according to the factors indicated by our model as having significant impact on the SEA. These factors were then organized to provide an in-depth examination of both the SEA itself and the within-state factors that affect it. Within-state factors included:

- state sociopolitical climate and demographics, particularly attitudes toward education, government, and change;
- state wealth and the financing of education;

- actions of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of state government; and
- education organizations and interest groups outside the SEA.

Looking more directly at the SEA itself, critical factors included:

- the chief state school officer;
- the organization of the SEA;
- the relationship between the SEA, LEAs, and IUs (if present); and
- relationships between the SEA and the federal government.

These factors have great impact on the strategy an SEA adopts and the activities it initiates to carry out that strategy. In the discussion that follows, we will briefly review these factors, indicating some of the more basic general differences between maintenance and development states with respect to each of them. Building on this general discussion, Chapter 3 provides an in-depth discussion of how these factors were manifested in our ten state sample.

A. State Sociopolitical Climate and Demographics

This factor refers to the attitudes of the state's population regarding the role of education and government at all levels, and to the prevailing attitudes about change. States with maintenance SEAs tend to be largely homogeneous in population with firmly planted notions about the proper function of schooling. In general, changes are suspect. Attitudes toward government are similar and a "less is better" view tends to prevail.

In states with development agencies, pluralism tends to be the rule. These states are, for the most part, highly industrialized, urbanized states with diverse populations creating competing education constituencies. Attitudes about government intervention are more permissive, allowing the possibility for strong SEA leadership to develop.

B. State Wealth and the Financing of Education

This factor includes the amount of resources generally available to a state and the proportion spent on education in particular. States with maintenance SEAs tend to allocate fewer funds from all sources for educational purposes when compared with development states. Consequently, in comparison to development states, these states have (1) lower per pupil expenditure; (2) lower SEA and federal contributions to LEA funding; and (3) smaller SEA operating budgets. Federal funds, with their not inconsiderable strings attached, may in fact be eschewed altogether by maintenance

states. Development states, on the other hand, are generally aggressive in their pursuit of funding at all levels, including the federal government.

C. Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches of State Government

The political environment and level of political activity in a state is a significant factor to consider in any examination of the SEA. Actions by the governor's office, legislature, and courts are of particular importance. In general, there have been few incentives and many disincentives for governors to become directly involved in education, although there are indications that this state of affairs may be changing. Legislatures have been more eager to influence education in their states. In fact, some SEAs have been forced from a maintenance orientation to a more activist position through new education laws enacted by concerned legislatures. In fewer cases, the courts have caused similar responses through their rulings on education cases. As we shall see, in some states with maintenance SEAs, actions by the state legislature that would have meant increased SEA involvement in local schools have been headed off because the aversion to such activity on the part of the SEA is even stronger than concerns about the status of schooling.

In general, maintenance SEAs tend to be those whose state government remains relatively passive and inactive in the educational arena, thus allowing the SEA to pursue its own goals and continue in its regular routine. In contrast, development SEAs are more likely to have activist governments which attempt to become involved in and influence education in the state.

D. Education Organizations and Interest Groups

In addition to the SEA, a state may include universities and colleges, private non-profit firms, and federal R&D centers and laboratories among its significant educational organizations. The state facilitator project of the National Diffusion Network, for example, may be located outside the SEA. Any or all of these may have an impact on the SEA.

We found very little involvement on the part of universities and colleges in SEA-sponsored dissemination and school improvement activities, although there were a few exceptions.

In states with maintenance SEAs, these other education organizations often provide the services that the SEAs do not, thus, in a sense further inhibiting the SEA from moving away from pure administration and regulatory responsibilities.

Development SEAs, on the other hand, sometimes compete or even eclipse the efforts of other organizations to provide services to schools. For example, some SEAs are now very active in providing inservice and professional development courses for teachers and

administrators, thus crossing into territory that has belonged to the universities and colleges. Development SEAs may also be more active in seeking services from other organizations to enhance SEA capabilities. Generally speaking, an SEA such as Maryland, which had a strong and comprehensive school improvement program, would implicitly or explicitly force other within-state education service providers to focus on SEA priorities for LEAs.

Education interest groups can also exert strong pressure in education matters in both development and maintenance states. In our sample states, such groups ranged from the Alliance for School Improvement in Nebraska to the Pennsylvania State Educational Association, the former a group of parents determined to maintain the status quo and especially to retard school consolidation efforts, the latter the main organized voice of teachers in the state, one which could make or break elections for governors. We did not see any one group having critical impact on SEA actions, but their sum total in any one state served to politicize education decision-making and slow movement in any direction.

E. Chief State School Officer (CSSO)

The educational leader in a state can have critical impact on an SEA's role in educational improvement. In discussing the chief state school officer, it is important to separate the position from the individual appointed or elected to fill it. The role of CSSO varies widely from state to state; the range of actions open to some chiefs is much broader than that available to others. Whether the chief is appointed or elected does not seem to matter, at least as far as our case studies indicated, nor does it appear to make a difference whether the appointment is made by the state board or governor. Some chiefs in our sample came from outside the SEA; some were chosen from inside the agency. This did not demarcate their subsequent behavior either.

Better guides to whether chiefs are activist or not, whether they will administer business as usual or try to change things, seem to be (1) their charge or mission at the time they assume office and/or (2) change in the state political scene necessitating unprecedented action on the part of the incumbent chief. In the first case, the charge can be a general one because it is the long-standing custom in some states with development SEAs for the CSSO to be an initiator of programs, or it can be an unprecedented circumstance that calls for the selection of a CSSO who is more than a capable administrator. We encountered this latter situation in two of our study states. The second case -- change in state political climate -- occurred just once in our sample, but it is intriguing to speculate about other states in which the tables might turn -- and what the response of the chiefs might be.

The leadership abilities and personality of the CSSO present additional factors affecting the strategies and activities developed by the SEA. A chief may assume office with a mission but as a result of personality or management style either be unable to translate it into action at all or only be able to do so with severe difficulties. (This is not to say, however, that SEA structure and other factors are not also relevant. These are discussed in the next section.)

In states with maintenance SEAs, the chiefs have no charge for unprecedented action; they are to tend to business as usual. It is not surprising, then, to find these offices occupied by men and women who are expert at doing just that -- running the shop. As would be expected, in states with development SEAs, the situation is quite the opposite. The chiefs are activists, often initiating major school improvement efforts, reorganizing the SEAs, and in general challenging the status quo with the intention of providing new and different educational services to meet the states' changing needs.

F. Organization of the SEA

There are several variables which need to be considered under SEA organization, e.g., number of personnel, channels of communication, organizational patterns, budget, salary levels, career patterns, civil service. Also important for assessing how far SEAs might have to go toward adopting an active service orientation is understanding the SEA's image in the state. In some states, the SEA is viewed benignly or at least neutrally by other education organizations, including LEAs, even though its role is largely regulatory/administrative. In other states, previous chiefs or staffs have alienated the educational community to the extent that it does not matter whether the SEA wants to be regulatory or service-oriented; there is much fence repair to be done before the agency can act in any direction.

A chief who wants to harness his/her agency for new initiatives must also consider the rules governing its organization. Whether or not and how the SEA is governed by civil service, for example, is a crucial variable for a manager attempting to implement sweeping -- or even modest -- changes in SEA operations. Finally, the functional capacity of the SEA in certain arenas is an important consideration. Planning is a different activity than administration; service is different from enforcing regulations; acting is different than reacting.

Not surprisingly, we found that large SEA staff size and budget were positively associated with the more elaborate, comprehensive SEA activities that are characteristic of development SEAs. In contrast, the maintenance SEAs tended to have low operating budgets, small staffs, and modest quarters. In Virginia, for example, the salaries were lower than those for comparable positions in the northern Virginia suburban school districts. Nevertheless, maintenance SEAs typically use fewer federal dollars

to cover operating costs, whereas the large development SEA in Michigan, for example, was described as "virtually another federal operation." In fact, maintenance SEAs, as we shall see, have been slow to apply for federal dissemination monies, not wanting to increase dependence on such external resources.

G. Relationships Between SEA, LEAs, and IUs (if present)

Our focus here was the expectations of LEAs about the proper role of the SEA. In the face of declining local resources, many LEAs are looking to the state for funds, and with those funds may come the opportunity for increased SEA participation.

The number of LEAs to be worked with is also important, especially if the SEA wants to initiate school-based activities. The presence of IUs in the state may complicate matters considerably; an SEA wanting to adopt more of a service orientation may find that role already occupied by IUs, causing turf problems.

In states with maintenance SEAs, the state agency's role is to be as inconspicuous as possible. The most valuable "services" an SEA can provide from the point of view of LEAs are to ensure that funds are allocated by the legislature and to buffer and attenuate the impact of regulations percolating down from the federal level. However, even in these states, the current critical climate across the country regarding the performance of schools is creating pressure on LEAs, providing opportunities for the SEAs which heretofore have been precluded.

LEAs in states with development SEAs have long been accustomed to SEA intervention. Here, too, the expectations for increased SEA assistance seem to be growing although LEAs have, in fact, become inured to frequent and shifting SEA initiatives and so tend to adopt "wait-and-see" attitudes. Because of its past erratic record, an SEA may have difficulty convincing LEAs that it really means business this time. Indeed, in many states with fervent SEA activity, one would be hard pressed to find indications of impact at the local level: turbulence at the ocean's surface may leave little trace on the sea-bed.

H. Relationships Between the SEA and the Federal Government

Probably the critical difference between maintenance and development SEAs on this dimension is that the former tend to come to the attention of federal staff because they have not done something in a certain area or not taken advantage of available federal funds (e.g., State Capacity Building Program grant money), while the latter are likely to cause a stir because they have taken action. Education for the handicapped provides an excellent example of this difference between the two patterns of behavior. Many of the development SEAs in our sample were ahead of the federal government on special education and in fact had to modify

their procedures to be in compliance when P.L. 94-142 came along. In contrast, many of the maintenance SEAs had taken little action regarding the handicapped and therefore had further to go but less to undo.

Federal money for dissemination activities is generally more critical for development SEAs. These SEAs are more likely to have planned dissemination activities and therefore want to take advantage of such funding to implement their plans. By and large, as we have noted, the maintenance SEAs in our sample have been slow to avail themselves of optional dissemination funds.

As the above discussion indicates, these eight categories of factors can be used to differentiate SEAs according to their maintenance- and development-oriented organizational behavior. Chapter 3 discusses this differentiation of our sample, based on a detailed analysis of the various manifestations of these factors in each of our ten SEAs. This is followed by an examination of the ways in which these different orientations translate into strategies and activities for school improvement and dissemination.

CHAPTER 3:

MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

As discussed in Chapter 2, the organizational behavior of an SEA can be differentiated according to one of two patterns of organizational behavior: maintenance and development. Of the ten SEAs in our sample, four -- Nebraska, South Dakota, Maine, and Virginia -- are maintenance agencies. The remaining six -- Maryland, Michigan, Arizona, Pennsylvania, California, and Illinois -- reflect a development pattern of behavior.

In the first section of this chapter, we describe the sample maintenance SEAs, focusing on the factors outlined in our model and discussed in Section III of the previous chapter. This will be followed by a similar discussion of the sample development SEAs.

I. THE MAINTENANCE SEAs

Nebraska, South Dakota, Maine, and Virginia can clearly be classified as maintenance agencies as characterized by the critical factors in our systems model of the SEA. A strong tradition of localism pervaded these SEAs and their respective states. Isolation and agrarian ways had bred self-help traditions which made the citizenry wary of outside influence and change in general. Thus these SEAs were far more concerned with preserving harmony and maintaining the status quo than in initiating or supporting change efforts.

A. State Sociopolitical Climate and Demographics

All four of the maintenance SEAs were located in rural states with sparse and largely homogeneous populations. The site investigators described these states in the following manner:

> Nebraska is extremely rural. Half the population lives in the eastern 1/6 of the state. . . . Nebraskans are generally content with their lives, and fight vigorously to preserve accustomed patterns. They are convinced that winning football teams and bounteous wheat crops are not achieved through radical experimentation. Rural, agrarian, and conservative, the Nebraskans generally resent the disruptions of change.
>
> Except for its sheer space, everything in South Dakota is small. The state ranks 44th in population (686,000) and 39th in rate of growth (3.5%). Pierre, the capital city, has only 10,000 residents. South Dakota is heavily rural and agricultural. The Missouri River divides the state in half, creating a significant east-west split. "West-river" is primarily rolling hills and grazing land inhabited by farming and ranching families that have

worked the land for generations. . . . The demographic features of the state foster strict adherence to the status quo. The state superintendent of public instruction summarized, "Things don't change fast in South Dakota."

Maine is a rural state with limited resources, informal communications networks, and strong traditions of "yankee independence." The size of the state contributes to the needs for informal links. There are large areas that are sparsely populated and in which school people do not have easy access either to the state capital or to university centers. In fact, portions of the state are still known as the "unorganized territories." . . . This spatial isolation, then, encourages word-of-mouth communication and strong personal contacts.

Virginia is predominantly a conservative state. It should be noted that the northern portion of the state is rather cosmopolitan and sophisticated, providing a large number of personnel for the government agencies in Wahington, D.C. However, it is not typical of much of the state. On the contrary, Virginians are said to be wary of outsiders . . . state department officials spoke about the existence of different regions. At the very least, the regional variation caused them to support dissemination strategies that focused on adaptations rather than on importing entire packages or programs intact.

B. State Wealth and the Financing of Education

The national average for state contributions to elementary and secondary education was 49.0%, with 42.9% coming from local sources and 8.1% coming from the federal government (1981-82 figures, Adams, 1982). Between 1974-75 and 1980-81, the state percentage of educational revenue grew by 11%, matched by a similar 10.2% rise in the federal share. During the same period, the portion of revenue derived from local sources increased by only 5.7%. On average then, the state proportion of educational funding grew nearly twice as fast as the local. Overall, the local share was well below half of all educational revenues.

This picture is not accurate for three of the four of our states with maintenance SEAs. The state share of expenditures for schooling was, for the most part, low in these states. As befits true maintenance behavior, Nebraska and South Dakota ranked 49th and 48th, respectively, in the percentage of state funds allocated to elementary and secondary education relative to local or federal sources. In 1981-82, Nebraska drew 16.7% of education monies from state sources compared to 75.7% from local sources; South Dakota garnered 27.2% from state sources (and that had grown 22.2% over the preceding six years) with 61.0% coming from the local sector. The federal contribution in Nebraska and South Dakota was 7.5% and 11.8%, respectively.

In Virginia -- which ranked 35th in 1981-82, below the national average -- the state gave 40.6% of education funds with the locals contributing 51.6% and the federal government, 7.8%. The state share grew 14.9% over the preceding six years, quite a bit faster than the national average.

Maine shifted the balance away from local sources of revenue, in this respect falling outside the typical maintenance pattern. In fact, of our sample states, Maine had the second lowest local contribution; only California was lower. In 1981, state support of education accounted for 49.1% and federal for 9.9%, leaving 41.0% for the local share -- proportions quite similar to the national average. It ranked 23rd on state proportion of elementary/secondary education revenues.

C. Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches of State Government

In these states, the tradition of local control was strong and there was little basis in the state political culture to support more than marginal SEA involvement in local school affairs. The role of the SEA was to monitor local districts to ensure that minimal standards prescribed by law were met. There had been legislative movement in these states to improve schools by mandating minimum competency testing programs in basic skills. A strong argument against this, however, had been that such mandating would increase the size and cost of state government, and require more SEA intrusion into local school affairs. The maintenance pattern prevailed in these states to the extent that the substantive goal of instituting basic skills testing programs was subordinated to the political goal of limiting the role of state government in forcing LEAs to do things they would otherwise not do. In these cases, political conservatism overruled curricular conservatism.

What little impetus for change there was in these maintenance SEAs, however, was derived primarily from state legislatures although the governor of South Dakota seemed interested in educational affairs as well. In Nebraska, for example, the legislature was actively involved in school finance and testing although with mixed results. A referendum defeated a recent law to boost by 2% the state's share of elementary/secondary revenues. Another effort by the legislature to introduce mandatory testing as a requirement for high school graduation was defeated on the grounds that it would lead to a statewide curriculum with loss of local autonomy. Mandatory testing for elementary students was instituted but standards and instruments were left to local districts. Despite uneven success, the legislature was the most effective catalyst for change in Nebraska's schools. The threat of law provided more of an incentive for local school improvement than the meager technical assistance of the Nebraska Department of Education (NDOE). The sudden emergence of an accountability bill on the floor of the legislature spurred feverish curriculum development throughout the state. "People change their behavior around here only when they receive a legal goose," explained an NDOE staffer.

Both the governor and the legislature increased their involvement in formulating South Dakota's education policy. The governor shifted decision-making power away from the state board of education and into the hands of his appointee, the secretary of education and cultural affairs. The secretary was given almost total control of personnel, budget, and the general operation of the SEA. Working hand-in-hand with the governor, the legislature also assumed an activist role in education. Driven by the conviction that the bureaucrats were unwilling or unable to "do it right," the legislature took the responsibility for specifying in law the details of education policy and programs.

This involvement of state government in educational affairs represented a marked departure from accustomed political behavior in South Dakota. The intervention of the governor and legislature stymied and neutralized the SEA and the state board. Ironically, the governor employed a radical change strategy in service of his conservative ideology. By couching his increased involvement in terms of "efficiency and economy," he muted the criticisms of the SEA and state board, whose authority and discretion were reduced even below their former level. The state provided only a small proportion of local education revenues, and state monitoring of schools remained inconsequential. However, the governor's assertion of power at the top was a significant shift in governance of education in South Dakota.

Maine's new governor had been in office for only four months at the time our case studies were conducted. It was therefore too soon to determine his impact on education in the state. However, he appeared to be taking some interest in education by appointing his own nominee as commissioner, passing over the recommendation of the state board of education. In addition, SEA officials and observers felt that the educational climate had improved under his administration.

In Virginia, both the governor and the legislature were relatively uninvolved in educational affairs, although there was precedent for the legislature, i.e., the general assembly, to overrule the state board of education. Since 1972, the general assembly had issued standards of quality emphasizing different areas of education. These standards were actually proposed by the state board of education, subject to modification by the legislature. In 1976, the general assembly expanded its role and completely disregarded the board's recommendations, issuing its own instead. According to several officials, the standards developed by the legislature were not a problem for LEAs; but the exercise of such power by the general assembly was. That occasion represented the peak of legislative power, however, and the general assembly then returned to its former role.

D. Education Organizations and Interest Groups

In addition to the state education agencies themselves, these four states also contained a diverse number of educational organizations and interest groups which influenced the SEA.

The pattern of education interest groups impinging on policy tended not to be complex and diversified in these states. The interest groups were uniformly opposed to radical change, indeed change of any kind. The greatest source of controversy in education policy was raised by conservative politicians and citizen groups who objected to (among other things) some of the innovations for which federal education programs requested SEA assistance in disseminating. All four states had active conservative citizen groups with important influence on education policy at the state level. In Nebraska, for example, one such group, the Alliance for School Improvement, arose in opposition to school consolidation in the 1950s. Ever since then, "school improvement" has been associated with this group. In South Dakota, a right-wing group called Parents Concerned About Education had become extremely active. In the rural western part of the state, there was a growing movement which advocated return to the one-room schoolhouse, elimination of governmental regulations, and reintroduction of moral education. Active in Maine were the Guardians of Education in Maine (GEM), a group opposed to values clarification; a Christian education movement; and a home-tutoring group. Conservative reaction prompted the Maine Title IV-C office to change the name of its program, dropping the red-flag word "innovations" and adopting the less inflammatory phrase, "school improvement."

Other education organizations offered more opportunities for enhancing school improvement efforts in these states. In Maine and Virginia, for example, the NDN state facilitator projects were located outside of the state education agency, and there was general feeling both inside and outside the SEAs in those states that the state facilitators (SFs) were much more effective precisely because they were disconnected from state government. In Maine, at least some of the project's success with local school districts came from the fact that its sole purpose was to provide assistance; it was in no way regulatory. The Maine Facilitator Center operated as a kind of broker, providing NDN programs to local districts seeking them. The director played an active role, working largely through personal contacts, in addition to awareness sessions, to inform people of his services. His operation was a "bottom-up collaborative," in his view, with considerable local district input. Although he emphasized replication of practices which might seem to decrease local control and individuality, in acting as a broker he promoted a sense of local initiative and control. This worked very well in a rural state such as Maine with a strong tradition of independence.

In Virginia, the state facilitator's sphere of activity was more constrained. In fact, the project was physically located in South Carolina. The SF visited Virginia once or twice per month, holding awareness conferences and presenting nationally validated programs. However, any school district interested in adopting a project was required to contact the Virginia SEA, which, in turn, contacted the SF. The reason given for this procedure was that the SEA controlled funding, for example, through Title IV-C.

A range of other organizations also provided educational services in the four states. In South Dakota, for example, the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL), the Education Commission of the States, and local universities all responded to SEA and LEA requests for assistance, primarily by conducting research and providing training. In addition, the Association of School Administrators and the Association of School Board Members both provided inservice workshops.

In Maine, it was not the universities but the Mid-Coast Teachers' Center (MCTC) that appeared to be most helpful to practitioners. The only federally funded teacher center in the state, it served 42 schools in 8 districts in and around Searsport. The teacher center sought to develop a large, computer-accessed information base to link teachers with ideas or practices relevant to their needs. An important component of this information base was a pool of locally-developed, teacher-made instructional materials. According to the center's information coordinator, developing this resource base was especially important because teachers were more likely to use locally created materials. The center hoped also to develop a model to have teachers train other teachers. Such a model involved inservice, which MCTC staff felt promoted the incorporation of information into practice and enabled teachers to rely on themselves, rather than having to depend on outside experts.

E. Chief State School Officer (CSSO)

The position of the chief state school officer varied from state to state. In all four states, the CSSO was appointed, in South Dakota and Nebraska by the state board of education, and in Maine and Virginia, by the governor. The Nebraska and Maine CSSOs were called Commissioners of Education and represented the top education figures in their states. As a result of relatively recent changes, the educational hierarchies in South Dakota and Virginia were more complicated.

South Dakota's department of education was recrganized in 1974, creating the State Department of Education and Cultural Affairs (DECA). The CSSO -- previously elected -- managed the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education within DECA and was responsible to the secretary of educational affairs, who was chief executive of DECA and had "approval rights" over the state school board selection of the CSSO. This effectively assured gubernatorial influence over the position.

The situation in Virginia was somewhat similar. In that state too, there was a secretary of education as well as a CSSO, called the state superintendent of instruction. The position of secretary was created in 1972 with the major responsibility of developing the education budget. The CSSO formulated state education policy -- which did not require the secretary's approval -- and managed the education department. Both were governor's appointees.

One can sense from these arrangements the close ties of education to the rest of state government. Indeed, the chiefs in all the states had to work to keep happy all the major interest groups and the citizenry in general. In South Dakota, Maine, and to some extent, Virginia, education relations had deteriorated under the previous CSSOs, and the new role-holders were striving to mend fences, thereby improving the image of the SEA.

Although the new Virginia and Maine CSSOs talked about leadership, in general the chiefs in the four states saw their roles and their agencies as having limited, even indirect, impact on local educational change.

Maintenance agencies tend not to have central initiatives or priorities toward which all units are oriented. These four states were no exception. The chiefs and their deputies mediated among different units, each of which essentially went about its own business. While some chiefs were described as having "staying power," they were said not to have much power to change standard operating procedures. According to one official in Nebraska, "In this state, no one person has much power over anything." The chief in Maine indicated that his best shot at stimulating change was to set a "positive tone" and a "can-do atmosphere" for education in the state, and hope it would "trickle down" through the agency and out to the districts.

F. Organization of the SEA

The state departments of education in these four states had uniformly small staffs, few programs, and limited views of their functions in education. They were all organized on categorical lines, according to the origins of the money used to operate the individual programs. Regulation and administration were the business of the day, with service and technical assistance largely provided on an ad hoc, informal, and categorical basis. Dissemination was also a matter for individual programs, although there were some glimmers of larger impact here and there.

The rules governing the SEAs varied from state to state. In Maine, for example, all but one SEA employee was civil service at the time of our field work, although several associate commissioner positions were going to be unclassified in 1980. In Virginia, there was no civil service.

SEA staff tended to be drawn from the ranks of local district administrators and other educational agencies within the state. Average salaries tended to be low. In South Dakota, for example, SEA staff received the third lowest salaries in the country. In Virginia, the SEA was less well paid and equipped in many departments than the equivalent departments in the Fairfax County School District.

Although the states varied on the proportion of federal funds supporting SEA operations, the levels were low compared to some other states in our sample. Virginia, for example, received one-third of its SEA money from federal sources -- a very low figure -- while the South Dakota SEA received forty percent of its support from the national government.

At the time of our fieldwork, only Nebraska had intermediate units. These entities provided almost all the services given to LEAs. The SEA did not receive credit for the provision of services, however, because the educational service units were autonomous organizations responsible to their own boards, not the state.

"Don't rock the boat" was a common motto in these maintenance agencies. We found an institutionalized skepticism about what one called the "radical experimentation" of the past. The Nebraska SEA had recently disbanded its office of planning and research after its "industrious, eager, and intelligent eccentrics" had run amuck by pushing their proposals too forcefully. A veteran insider reflected, "Their strategies were inappropriate for this place. To make things happen around here, you have to meet them on their own conservative terms, and accept the fact that change must happen very gradually." Another exclaimed in frustration, "The competence is there, but everyone seems to waffle around for fear that something might change, forcing them to really do something."

Some state officials seemed to have internalized the low power position of the agency in general, and almost apologized for their role as state bureaucrats. For example, one official in South Dakota frankly said that, "If we get visible at the local level, people will turn off to our ideas." Another in Maine admitted that, "We are notorious for one-day workshops. You know, the people who blow into town one day, and blow out of town the next day, and you never see them again? That atmosphere is out there, and we have to work to correct that." In Nebraska, an official admitted that the agency had a public reputation for being "a bungling bureaucracy of powerless patsies." In Virginia, we heard several state officials mention the desirability of instituting some kind of revolving arrangement that would allow state officials to return to the local level for a brief period to reinforce the "local perspective."

Beneath this self-effacing attitude by state officials themselves was an ambivalence about the relationship between enforcement and assistance. In Virginia, the enforcement role of the agency contributed to a sense of benign paternalism toward the locals, whereas in the other three maintenance states, we found a tendency among agency officials to downplay enforcement functions and focus upon the minimal assistance role they could play. In the latter view, the legacy of enforcement in the minds of local school people was an obstacle to the more "progressive" image of the state's role. With little legitimacy for a strong state role, SEA officials generally preferred to see themselves as supplying one or two carrots rather than wielding sticks toward local school districts.

G. Relationships Between SEA, LEAs, and IUs

As we have stressed throughout the discussion of these four states, respect and preservation of local autonomy was a central issue governing the relationship between SEAs and LEAs. In Nebraska, for example, residents were essentially pleased with their schools and were slow to implement innovations. SEA officials refrained from interfering with local autonomy, limiting school improvement activities to providing sparse and uncoordinated technical assistance. The extensive number of school districts and intermediate service agencies in the state further hindered the promotion of statewide educational reform. Each district was concerned with its own autonomy and resented SEA intrusion. The six largest districts had, at times, functioned as a power bloc, with their superintendents able to effectively squash NDOE initiatives which did not address their interests.

Similarly in South Dakota, attempts to promote educational innovation, particularly ones which appeared to threaten local control, were usually rejected. There were numerous external and internal restraints on the SEA's ability to promote educational change. Its activities were limited primarily to the informal provision of technical assistance supporting local initiatives and to enforcement of the law. LEAs had little contact with the SEA unless they were in open violation of the law.

Maine's state education agency presented a similar situation. SEA administrators, including the commissioner, were reluctant to formally exercise their authority over the LEAs. For example, Title IV-C officials claimed to have issued no state mandates concerning preferred program areas. Because the SEA had no power base for a more active role in school improvement, it concentrated its activities in areas where it had clear authority -- the enforcement of regulations. Several officials indicated that they believed dissemination and technical assistance functions were best handled by external agents not stigmatized by the bad reputation of the SEA. Most of Maine's dissemination activities, in fact, were centered in external organizations whose activities were also designed to respect local autonomy. There had, however, been pressure on the SEA to participate more actively in educational activities. The new approach developed for the agency was one which provided the SEA with a more active role while also maintaining LEA autonomy; this was the role of "broker," linking LEA needs with existing resources. Still in its early stages of development at the time of our fieldwork, it remained to be seen how this new role for the SEA would actually be implemented.

Consistent with Maine, South Dakota, and Nebraska, the critical issue in SEA-LEA relationships in Virginia was local autonomy. Educational policymaking authority was concentrated at the local level. Local school districts were coterminous with county and city governments and school boards were fiscally dependent on the local government agency. SEA officials viewed their role as primarily one of "leadership," which often actually meant advocacy on behalf of LEAs at legislative budget hearings. Secondarily,

SEA officials also saw an enforcer or regulatory role for the agency. The state organizational chart indicated the major activity of the SEA to be administrative, with few positions indicating responsibility for other functions.

Nebraska was the only one of the four maintenance states to have educational service units. Spread throughout the state, these units were developing trusted relationships with local school districts. Because they were fiscally and programatically autonomous, they were relatively free of the political restrictions which harnessed the SEA.

H. Relationships Between the SEA and the Federal Government

The federal government was generally distrusted in these states. Top SEA officials were wary of accepting federal money because, in their view, the bureaucratic disruptions to the SEA were often not worth the substantive benefits the programs would bring to local districts. Some SEA officials openly resented being "force-fed" by the federal regulations that accompanied federal money. Senior SEA officials were very concerned about having to transfer salaried employees to state budgets after short-term federal "seed money" was withdrawn. Indeed, the recent and pending federal budget cuts will deepen their skepticism about seeking and relying on uncertain federal funds. For a maintenance agency, the fiscal instability introduced by dependence on federal funds is a bad thing in itself. Some of our maintenance SEAs deliberately ignored federal funding opportunities for school improvement because of a general bias against federal money.

In general, maintenance SEAs wanted even less federal influence in their organizations than they professed to want in local schools. These SEAs tended to interpret the concept of "state leadership" in education primarily as securing an increasing amount of general aid for education from the state legislature each year. The objections of the maintenance SEAs to the influence of federal regulations tended to take the form of passive recalcitrance or non-participation, in contrast to development SEAs, which actively worked at changing the federal regulations to allow them more discretion to put federal dollars behind state school improvement initiatives.

The site investigators summarized the relationships between each of the four maintenance SEAs and the federal government in the following manner:

> Federal policy-makers should recognize that states like Nebraska are often neither willing nor able to promote the school improvement initiatives conceived in Washington. They need the latitude of relaxed time schedules and flexible financial resources to develop strategies that address the unique configuration of factors which influence education in their own environments. For example, in Nebraska, the state facilitator project has more than 1,000 school districts to serve on a $40,000 budget. Moreover, the SF must work to

overcome LEA administrators' reluctance to invest in someone else's program when they perceive that local citizens are content with the home-grown approaches.

In South Dakota, federal intervention to promote school improvement is highly controversial. As a result, relations between state and federal officials are often distant and strained. "The way things have to be done" in South Dakota is to follow existing norms. In relating to the South Dakota SEA, federal authorities encounter the same obstacles of tradition that the SEA faces in dealing with its locals. Force-feeding South Dakotans is probably counter-productive. In the case of the State Capacity Building proposal, the SEA is still actively considering rejecting the funds, primarily in defiance of the attempt to "tell us what to do and how to do it."

The issue of autonomy becomes important when looking at state-federal relations in Maine. Maine is a provincial state that is wary of outsiders. This was especially evident under the previous commissioner, who was suspicious of the demands the federal government would make on the state in exchange for funding. In fact, the state did not pursue federal money for a planning grant to develop a capacity building proposal because the state did not want to "jump through too many federal hoops." Despite its reservations about federal interference, Maine has in fact participated in all programs for which it is eligible. In fact, federal regulations have had a dual effect: on one hand, they hamper dissemination efforts by restricting ways money can be spent and thus limiting efforts to coordinate dissemination across programs; on the other hand, federal regulations have provided the impetus to much of the dissemination effort that exists. The federal role that is appreciated in Maine is one that provides support but that allows the state to exercise its own authority.

Virginians are not eager recipients of federal money, and with it, federal authority. Specifically, officials indicated three problems in dealing with the federal government. First, federal regulations are too detailed and cumbersome, and allow too little flexibility. Second, they have forced the state into a more active role than it is accustomed to and than the LEAs are happy with (and perhaps than the SEA is happy with). And finally, at least one administrator felt that federal money was too broken up.

I. Summary of Maintenance SEAs

To summarize, we found that four state education agencies in our sample -- Maine, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Virginia -- could clearly be classified as maintenance according to the factors in

our systems model of state education agencies. As maintenance SEAs, they can be characterized in the following manner.

- They were located in rural states with sparse and largely homogeneous populations wary of outside influences and change.
- For the most part, the state share of expenditures for schooling was low.
- The tradition of local control was strong and there was little basis in the state political culture to support more than marginal SEA involvement in local affairs. What little impetus for change there was, however, came primarily from state legislatures.
- There were a diverse number of educational organizations and interest groups operating in the states, often providing services which otherwise might have been provided by the SEAs.
- The chief state school officers saw their roles and agencies as having limited, even indirect, impact on local educational change. They also had little power to change standard operating procedures at the SEA level.
- The SEAs had uniformly small staffs, few programs, and limited views of their functions in education. Regulation and administration were the business of the day with service and technical assistance provided largely on an ad hoc, informal, and categorical basis.
- Respect and preservation of local autonomy was a central issue governing the relationships between SEAs and LEAs.
- The federal government was generally distrusted. The objections to the influence of federal regulations tended to take the form of passive recalcitrance or non-participation.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT SEAs

The remaining six SEAs in our sample can be classified as development agencies, although their manifestations of this organizational pattern differed somewhat from state to state. They included Maryland, Michigan, Arizona, Pennsylvania, California, and Illinois.

These states had a stronger tradition of state leadership in education, and correspondingly, somewhat less of the fervent localism that characterized the maintenance states. In contrast to the traditional, administrative leadership exhibited by the chief state school officers of the four previously discussed maintenance SEAs, the CSSOs in four of the six SEAs assumed the position with supporting precedents for a transforming leadership

style and programs of action. Of the other two chiefs -- located in Maryland and Arizona -- the former entered with a mandate to substantially change the course of the SEA, while the latter encountered pressure to do so while in office. These events marked the transition of the SEAs from maintenance to development patterns of behavior.

In this section, these and other distinguishing characteristics of development SEAs are discussed, again focusing on the eight factors outlined in our systems model of the SEA.

A. State Sociopolitical Climate and Demographics

The six development SEAs were located in the larger states of our sample and correspondingly had the larger state education agencies. They were highly industrialized, urbanized states with more pluralistic educational constituencies reflecting their heterogeneous populations. Arizona was somewhat of an exception to this, but was experiencing a population boom with the unsettledness associated with rapid growth.

Brief excerpts from the site reports describe the six states:

> California has the largest population of any state in the U.S. and ranks third in size. The state includes both highly urbanized and rural areas; its population is extremely heterogeneous, containing particularly large Hispanic and Asian populations. Recent efforts to reduce property taxes, e.g., Proposition 13, have drastically reduced the availability of funds for educational initiatives, activities, and services.
>
> Illinois has the fourth largest state population in the U.S. with over 11 million. In both size and population, it is equal to the entire New England region (minus the backwoods of Maine). In addition to Chicago and a number of other highly urbanized areas, the state also includes a sizeable rural population which continues to exert strong political influence.
>
> Maryland is a relatively small, densely populated state, ranking 42nd in land mass but sixth in population per square mile. A wealthy state with a large educational investment, Maryland ranks eleventh in per capita income, seventh in average teachers' salaries, and thirteenth in per capita expenditure on education. For its size, the state has great regional diversity, resulting in the label, "America in Miniature." It includes both highly urbanized and rural areas.

Michigan also includes both densely populated urban areas and vast expanses of sparsely populated rural countryside. The state has been relatively wealthy in the past. However, as the automobile industry felt the effects of the faltering U.S. economy, state finances were dealt a heavy blow. [Federal budget cuts have further increased the financial problems facing Michigan.]

Arizona is a large, relatively rural state with pockets of urbanization and growing development. It has been described by most observers as "a historically conservative and Republican state." [The belief in local control was more marked in this state than in the other five of our sample of development SEAs. This was consistent with the general social and political climate of the state and made the SEA's recent shift to an activist role rather remarkable.]

Pennsylvania is a state of average size, ranking 33rd in land mass, with densely populated, highly industralized, urbanized areas. Rural areas also remain in Pennsylvania, however. Similar to Michigan, the state has been hard hit by the economic recession which has had serious consequences for major Pennsylvania industries such as steel.

B. State Wealth and the Financing of Education

Although these states have been viewed as relatively prosperous, this image shifted dramatically for some in recent years. Pennsylvania and Michigan's fiscal conditions were rated low, for example, and California's financial situation worsened in the last few years. Only Arizona appeared to have unalloyed prospects for increasing education revenues as necessary (Adams, 1982).

Over the last twenty years, since the advent of ESEA, the SEA's role in educational policy had burgeoned in these states. In Michigan, state activism in fact predated ESEA; a new role was fashioned for the state in the revised constitution of 1963. California, too, had long had an SEA active in educational matters.

One indicator of state leverage in educational affairs is the proportion of revenues for elementary and secondary education contributed by the state. California was typical of far western states in that the state provided 74.3% of all funds for elementary and secondary education compared to the local contribution of 18.9% (1981-82 figures, Adams, 1982). Because historically the state preceded many of the local entities, the localism that was the hallmark of the northeast and some other regions of the country was simply not as strong in the west.

The state share in the other development states was not nearly so high; in fact, all were below the national average. Indeed, looking at all ten states in the sample, only Arizona, Maine, and Virginia were exceptions to the distributions that were typical for their regions. In general, the Mideast (Maryland and

Pennsylvania), Great Lakes (Illinois and Michigan), and Plains (Nebraska and South Dakota) along with the Northeast (where Maine is an exception), tended to contribute less than the national average from state sources (49% in 1981-82). In the Far West (California), along with the Southeast (where Virginia was an exception), Southwest, and Rocky Mountain regions, the exact opposite was true: the state proportion tended to be higher than the national average while the local share was lower. Arizona was an anomaly in its region; the state share was only 45% of education revenues and the local share was 43.6%. However, in the last few years, the state percentage grew tremendously, paralleling increased SEA activity.

Similar to Arizona, the SEA's proportion of education financing in the other states grew dramatically over the last several years as well and with it came increased leverage over local districts. The site report's discussion of funding of education in Illinois provides an example:

> The ratio of local, state, and federal funds for education in Illinois has changed significantly in the past ten years. The shift in school revenue from local to state funds reflects increasing influence of the Illinois Office of Education in local districts. In this same period, the federal share has increased gradually. This trend is significant for dissemination policy since the Illinois dissemination system is funded entirely with federal money.

C. Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches of State Government

In the six development states, there had been considerable impetus for educational change from the state legislature, governors, and, in a few instances, the courts. By and large, the state education agencies were able to use the actions from these groups to substantiate their own increased efforts in school improvement.

The Maryland Assembly, for example, became increasingly involved in shaping education policy during the 1970s. While education itself had not been a major public issue in electoral politics, the assembly's increased scrutiny over the financing and management of social services had included education, which comprised a considerable portion of Maryland's annual budget. In 1972, the assembly enacted an accountability bill. In 1976, it passed a bill mandating a minimum competency reading program for grades 2-12, requiring that the SEA mandate a sequence of minimum reading levels, with periodic testing and remedial services for students scoring one year below grade level. Another bill to require minimum proficiencies in all basic skills as a prerequisite to graduation was defeated. It was clear, however, that the assembly believed that the education bureaucracy needed prodding, and that legislating minimum competencies was the best way to get an improvement program going.

Project Basic was established in 1977 by the state board, whose resolutions had the force of law. It was initiated in part to head off further mandates from the assembly concerning basic skills and minimum competency testing. In his first report to the state board, David Hornbeck, the Maryland CSSO, said, "I have no doubt that we will see further legislation holding us accountable if we do not assume leadership ourselves." The courts had also been active in Maryland, having considered several cases involving financing education through property taxes.

In Michigan, a recent law authorized the state legislature to approve all federal monies coming into the state. As 88% of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) budget came from federal funds, this law could strip the agency of substantial autonomy. In addition, the legislature was formally responsible for the school aid bill, and the dispersal of its revenues to LEAs. At the time of our fieldwork, another constraint concerned the remoteness of the SEA from the state budget making process. In Michigan, the state board of education had responsibility for education policies. Thus, the governor had a more distant relationship to the MDE than with other agencies of state government. In good times, this made for greater autonomy; but in lean times, the distance from the governor was a liability in the budget process. Moreover, as then organized, only the state board of education, not the superintendent, could be represented at state budget meetings. Because the board was effectively disempowered during John Porter's tenure as superintendent, it was able to exert little influence at these meetings. Without an effective voice in these budget sessions, the agency had limited power to influence the decisions which directly determined the scope of its future operations.

Despite the theme of local control, the Arizona State Legislature pushed for more stringent accountability measures to be applied to local school districts, i.e., a new testing law requiring yearly standardized testing and new competency requirements. Federal mandates such as those imposed by the special education law P.L. 94-142 or the basic skills requirements of Title II further constricted the independence of local districts in determining school policies and programmatic objectives.

As in some other states across the country, Pennsylvanians indicated their desire to make public services less expensive, more efficient, and more accountable by electing in 1978, a "no-nonsense" Republican governor who indicated the intention to manage governmental offices as efficiently and rationally as private businesses. The governor's involvement in education issues was symbolized by his appointee as secretary of education. Governor Thornburg chose Robert Scanlon (prior director of Research for Better Schools, a federally supported regional laboratory based in Philadelphia) on the strength of his credentials as an expert in educational research and its application to improving schools. The two men shared a concern with increasing the efficiency of the educational system,

which accounted for over half the state's budget. Because of this concern, it was noted that the Pennsylvania Department of Education could not expect to receive additional funds to support a major programmatic effort, and in fact, Scanlon funded his School Improvement Program with existing monies.

The issue of school financing had the most profound influence on California education. The Jarvis-Gann amendment (Proposition 13) cut local property taxes in 1978. Initially, most programs remained relatively unaffected by this Amendment (summer school was the only major casualty) because the state had an enormous surplus to fall back upon. The state was able to absorb an increasing percentage of the local/state cost of educational programs, assuming 80% of these costs, an increase of 10% over 1978-79 and 34% over 1977-78. However, this surplus was nearly exhausted in 1979-80 and local schools began a drastic cutback in services. Legislation to put a cap on local spending (Proposition 2) further eroded the quality and quantity of programs.

Underlying all of this activity was the Supreme Court's Serrano vs. Priest decision. This action affected school financing nationwide, but had particular effect in California. The decision narrowed the per-pupil spending gap between high spending and low spending districts to no more than $150 per pupil in 94% of the state's school districts. For example, Beverly Hills lost 60% of its total revenue while Baldwin Park lost only 16%. Obviously, such school financing restrictions profoundly influenced all California Department of Education (CDE) programs.

Another pervasive issue was assessment. The California Assessment Program (CAP) was initiated by Assembly Bill 3408 in 1976 and modified by Assembly Bill 65 in 1977. The law required that all pupils be tested in basic skill proficiency (reading, writing, and computation) at least once in grades 4-6, once in grades 7-9, and again in grades 10-11. The emphasis was on local determination of content, degree of difficulty, and passing levels of the tests. The law did not prescribe a uniform set of proficiency standards or assessment procedure for every district. However, districts were required to design a system which allowed for early identification and remedial instruction of those students who failed the tests. In addition, the law specified that conferences be held with all failing students and their parents to devise remedial plans.

Although the Illinois legislature had consistently supported education and refrained from frequent legislative mandates, this seemed to be changing as political alignments shifted, and the economic squeeze dictated careful budgeting. Reform, professionalism, and fiscal accountability combined to reduce the "good ole boy" syndrome in SEA dealings with the legislature. Legislative staffs were younger, more competent, and tended to demand substantive answers from state administrators. Agencies with developed policy and planning capacities received high

appropriations. Since planning was a major objective of the Illinois Office of Education dissemination process, the political ramifications are obvious.

The Illinois legislature was active in a number of educational issues. They mandated a consumer education program; legislated the formula for the distribution of Title I federal funds and state matching funds upon the discovery that Chicago was discriminating against black students in the distribution of its monies; and created a joint commission on rules and regulations charged with reviewing and approving all state regulations issued by the bureaucracy in order to insure the fidelity of legislative intent.

One of the most sweeping changes to occur in any of our states was the removal from the political scene of the position of Illinois State Superintendent of Schools. Until 1975, state superintendents were elected and the education system in general was deeply affected by the patronage and corruption that often marked Illinois politics. The superintendent at the time of our fieldwork was the first appointed by the state board of education and so began his tenure with a charge to take the politics out of education and make it responsive to local schools' real needs.

D. Education Organizations and Interest Groups

Education organizations and interest groups were many and varied in the six development states. A variety of educational interest groups made themselves felt in the six states with development SEAs. For example, in Maryland, such single issue groups exerted growing pressure on all branches of Maryland's state government. The handicapped lobby was well financed and organized. The vocational education lobby was much older but had grown significantly from 1975 to 1980. A new gifted and talented lobby was gathering strength, drawing support from the middle and upper middle classes. These groups, in conjunction with the equal opportunity, anti-racism, and anti-sexism groups that had also established places in the system, lobbied to register their policy concerns. The impact of these separate efforts made it difficult to develop coherent policies within the SEA.

The Arizona Education Association (AEA) provided an example of a major educational interest group active in that state's education issues. The AEA was the only full-time educational lobby in the state and, according to an AEA government relations expert, represented 20,000 teachers in the state and could be quite influential in affecting educational policy. (The AEA supported Arizona's school improvement initiative in the basic skills.)

Similar to Arizona, the most powerful educational interest group in Pennsylvania was the Pennsylvania State Educational Association (PSEA). The PSEA's influence was critical in the appointment of the secretary of education and its support was often crucial in the election of the governor. Given the PSEA's political clout, its approval was also crucial to the success of a major SEA

initiative such as the new School Improvement Program so it was significant that the secretary of education received official PSEA endorsement of the program. While it did not pledge a direct role in the School Improvement Program, it was possible that the PSEA could build support for the program among its members.

In addition to these interest groups, numerous education organizations also exerted influence in the states. Of the six, only Maryland and Arizona did not have intermediate units (IUs), and it could be said that Maryland, because of its countywide LEA system, in fact had the equivalent of intermediate units. A detailed discussion of these IUs is included in the section describing SEA-LEA-IU relationships.

Four of the six development states had NDN state facilitator projects located outside the SEA. In Maryland, Arizona, and Illinois, the SF projects were located in private, non-profit firms; in Pennsylvania, an intermediate unit was the host organization.

There were a variety of reasons why the SF projects had not been formally included in these SEAs. In Maryland, for example, the SEA chose not to pursue the facilitator contract for several reasons: in its early stages, it was too small and uncertain to attract much attention in the agency; several key middle managers in the SEA thought it would be more effective outside the agency; and the superintendent was skeptical of developing special dissemination units not directly linked to the implementation of the SEA's programmatic objectives.

All four of the (externally based) NDN state facilitators worked with their respective SEAs, but at the same time kept their distance from these agencies. In Illinois, for example, the top administration of the Illinois Office of Education (IOE) had been philosophically in conflict with the SF project, i.e., the former emphasized problem-solving while the latter focused on solution-giving. Even so, the SF worked collaboratively with lower SEA officials. She transferred her responsibility to "secure the adoption within the state of a variety of exemplary projects developed in other states" to the regional service teams of the IOE, assuming the role of trainer and resource person in support of the IOE efforts. Over the years, her role shifted from negotiating out-of-state programs to collaborating with IOE staff in the dissemination of NDN projects.

In Maryland, the state facilitator maintained a good working relationship with the SEA but also kept a careful distance from it. Almost half the Title IV-C funds were awarded to adopters of NDN programs, providing an important source of support. Although the SF appeared on numerous state meeting and conference agendas, he avoided co-sponsoring meetings with the SEA in order to avoid association with SEA controveries surrounding Project Basic and other state initiatives.

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) also exerted some influence on the SEA. For example, consultants from IHEs helped SEAs solve internal problems, as in the case of Michigan State University, which assisted in designing a communication system for the Michigan SEA. In general, however, the relationships between activist SEAs and universities and colleges seemed to be ones of competition. SEAs and IUs increasingly offered in-service and professional development opportunities to both administrators and teachers. They also became increasingly involved in setting the competencies for new teachers. All this encroached upon the turf of the IHEs, which were already suffering from declining enrollments.

Moreover, experts from universities and colleges in these states did not enjoy a very positive rating from the practitioner community. Consultants from higher education were often perceived as too abstract, not sufficiently application-oriented, and unwilling or unable to transform research knowledge into actionable information.

For example, Illinois abounded with both public and private universities. While their number was impressive, the influence of IHEs in within-state school improvement and dissemination was indirect and even peripheral. One of the reasons for lack of organized university involvement in dissemination for school improvement may be found in the traditional distinction made between researchers and practitioners. According to the president of the University of Illinois, the major vehicle for the dissemination of university research was through teacher training and preparation. He recognized, however, that teachers represented only an informal mechanism for disseminating university research. Moreover, the role of the IHEs in teacher training was being challenged by the SEA. While the universities' role in research remained central, their position in dissemination for school improvement in terms of both their delivery mechanisms and cost efficiency, appeared to be facing stiff competition. Furthermore, outsiders criticized the relevance of their research for the type of practical problems faced by educational practitioners. As the University of Illinois president observed, universities face serious difficulties in executing their expertise in education -- namely, the technology for measurement and the gathering of valid information. "We don't disseminate information about the value and effects of research besides disseminating the research itself." The conflict between the researcher and the practitioner, then, has more to do with the concrete applications that appeal to practitioners as compared with the seemingly vague results of science and its credibility in a political form.

Only in Pennsylvania did there seem to be a systematic attempt to involve IHEs in school improvement initiatives at the time of our research. It appeared that IHEs in Pennsylvania were having difficulties attracting new students. They had been hurt by in-service councils operating in many IUs. These in-service councils offered courses required for teacher certification at

almost no cost. IU administrators also contended that their in-service councils offered courses that were more practical and relevant to teachers' needs.

By designing a prominent role for IHEs in the School Improvement Program, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) planners might have been trying to tap their underutilized resource and give them an opportunity to reorient their curricula to a more applied, problem-solving focus.

The new role for IHEs involved pairing each school district with a college or university. Participating IHEs appointed coordinators to work with PDE people and IU people on teams that helped local districts to implement a School Improvement Plan. Colleges and universities were to research the educational, political, social, and economic problems in specific schools; analyze and disseminate relevant research to the schools; conduct seminars for administrators, teachers, other specialists, and board members on how to apply research outcomes to their problems; and finally evaluate the implementation of research findings in the schools. PDE officials hoped that this role would enable IHEs to preserve and build on their student teaching programs, local in-service councils, and area study councils.

E. Chief State School Officer (CSSO)

The six states all had activist chief state school officers, although their individual styles differed from one another. Four of the six came to their positions from outside the SEA, and of those, two were brought from other states. These CSSOs were appointed by the state boards in Illinois and Maryland. In Pennsylvania, the secretary of education was appointed by the governor. In Arizona, the state superintendent of schools was popularly elected. The insider CSSOs in California and Michigan had been long-time SEA personnel, the former elected and the latter appointed by the state board of education to their positions as state superintendents of public instruction.

At the time of our fieldwork, Wilson Riles in California had had the longest tenure, having been elected in 1968. John Porter in Michigan had taken office in 1969 and had just resigned at the time of our data collection; he was succeeded by another insider, Philip Runkle. Joseph Cronin of Illinois, Carolyn Warner of Arizona, and David Hornbeck of Maryland had all assumed the leadership of their SEAs in the mid-1970s, while Robert Scanlon had just entered office in Pennsylvania.

Riles of California and Porter of Michigan took office in states where there was already a history of active SEA participation and intervention in local education matters. Their active roles were therefore not particularly surprising. The stories of the chiefs in the other states suggest more of a shift in SEA orientation and are worth exploring in somewhat more detail. We will begin with Illinois, which had a well-established program in place at the time of our fieldwork in 1979-80.

In the early 1970s, an Illinois constitutional convention created an outline for restructuring the governance and management of education in the state. Section 2 of Article X created a state board of education of seventeen members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate. This board in turn appointed the chief state school officer. (The Illinois CSSO had previously been an elective position.) The convention wanted the Illinois Office of Education removed from the fray of front-line electoral politics, where it had been a lucrative prize in the spoils system of Illinois politics. The new system of appointeeships was designed to protect the administration of education from the pressures of partisan politics, and thus created a context in which an outside group of professional managers could reform the SEA.

After a five-year transition, the state board appointed Joseph Cronin as the first superintendent under the new system. A native of Massachusetts, Cronin had been a professor and administrator at Harvard University, and was the state superintendent in the Massachusetts Commonwealth immediately before taking the Illinois post. Cronin brought Nelson Ashline to Illinois as his chief deputy and implementer of the reorganization of the IOE. Also from Harvard, Ashline had been instrumental in developing a new service delivery system "from the ground up" for the Rhode Island SEA. The two easterners were clearly outsiders when they came to Springfield. The professional managers gradually took hold of semi-independent domains that were led by school people who had slowly risen through the ranks of the IOE. A new organizational culture was infused into the IOE from the top down.

In Maryland, David Hornbeck was brought in from Pennsylvania, where he had worked on a number of projects in the SEA. He was appointed by the state board to take an active role in educational policies in the state, in large part to forestall further action by a restive legislature, which had already passed several educational bills. Hornbeck took charge quickly. In his first six months, during which time he had no day-to-day responsibilities, the new chief visited all the segments of the education community in Maryland, from SEA personnel to legislators to county superintendents, seeking their opinions. On the first day he took office, Hornbeck gave to the state board a comprehensive goal statement for the SEA, an outline for his main programmatic thrust (to be called Project Basic); and plans for several inter-divisional reorganizations within the SEA. He moved swiftly to put these plans into effect. Without the encumbrance of a civil service system, he was able to replace 10 of the 14 ranking staff in the department within the first 18 months.

Pennsylvania's story was somewhat different and indicated how structural details could make a major difference in implementation of new programs. Pennsylvania had already had at least one activist CSSO in the person of Jack Pittenger. But the SEA had a lingering image as largely a regulatory agency. Robert Scanlon, brought in from Research for Better Schools in Philadelphia to head the SEA, was the fourth secretary of education in eight

years. Like Hornbeck, Scanlon came in to institute major shifts in the SEA. However, his planning phase did not proceed as smoothly as Hornbeck's, partly because of Scanlon's own personality and partly because of the SEA. Among other changes, Scanlon instituted his version of a matrix management scheme to promote his School Improvement Program. As explained by an associate, "Matrix management allows us to take people with expertise or interest in a particular area -- such as school improvement -- from all divisions of the department, and have them work together to address that issue." However, she indicated that there were difficulties in getting the staff to accept this collaborative, task-force management style. "The department is used to being managed from the top down -- they want everything to come from the secretary. Matrix management calls for their involvement." Although the institution of matrix management through the creation of a school improvement task force was meant to be collaborative, one staffer explained that "it was basically set by Scanlon and the management team. The task force was just there to approve their ideas. Perhaps Scanlon never really intended to encourage staff participation, but wanted to create the appearance of participatory management."

There was some indication that the rush to initiate the School Improvement Program came because Scanlon felt that he had a "limited window for action," that he had to "score early" with a program that could define the department's mission. Whatever the reason, Scanlon's seemingly sudden push to promote the program provoked widespread dissatisfaction and anxiety within the SEA. Many SEA personnel engaged lawyers and some sought early retirement. In fact, Scanlon attempted to remove several SEA personnel only to be rebuffed by Pennsylvania's strong civil service code. In short, the CSSO's beginning was not an auspicious one; change efforts within the SEA itself were not going smoothly at all.

Arizona provided an example of the climate in a state shifting during the term of a CSSO, stimulating action in a new arena. As we have seen, the state legislature in Arizona had become quite involved in education policy and had mandated minimum competency testing and other bills. These actions, coupled with increasing federal mandates, had caused the SEA to take a much more active role than was previously the case. However, even with the new initiatives, SEA personnel were careful to pay due attention to the autonomy of local school districts. The Arizona Basic Skills Plan was just getting underway when we visited the state. The leadership structure in Arizona was a bit more complicated than in the other development states because Carolyn Warner, the elected superintendent of schools, was not viewed as the educational leader, but rather as the political liaison between the state's educational structure and the citizenry. Deputy Superintendent Hartgraves, whose name was noted on all department publications, was perceived as the SEA's leading educational professional, and therefore, the person most responsible for the educational decision-making within the department. In essence, what seemed to happen was that Warner, as the elected official, determined the

desire or will of the people with regard to education and Hartgraves, as the professional educator, determined how best to translate the "people's will" into practice. This division may in fact have fostered the acceptance of educational policy, giving it both political and substantive legitimacy.

Acknowledging that departmental staff could not be coerced by any means such as fear of termination or replacement by appointees of the CSSO since Arizona was also governed by a strong civil service system, the leadership relied on other change strategies to promote school improvement in Arizona. The superintendent used "moral persuasiveness" as a popularly elected official representing the people of Arizona and focused on the validity of "basic skills" as an education idea appropriate for the time. The leadership had also conceived a basic skills thrust in a way that would result in a minimal amount of disruption to the SEA. The program was primarily a management system which served to coordinate the basic skills activities of already existing programs. It did not create any new radical direction for the department nor did it create many additional activities with which SEA staff had to become involved. Consequently, staff who generally viewed the "basic skills" emphasis as sound educationally were not necessarily threatened by its adoption as the department's central emphasis.

F. Organization of the SEA

It is beyond the scope of this volume to discuss in great detail the extensive reorganizations of most of the SEAs in our six development states. What we have tried to do in this section is to indicate the intent of those shifts in SEA organization. Since the shifts in the Illinois SEA were accomplished by the time of our visit to the agency, we have described this reorganization in more detail, thereby providing an illustration of the reorganization efforts which can occur in development SEAs.

Cronin's intention was to make the Illinois SEA more responsive to the needs of LEAs, first by minimizing the regulatory functions of the department, and second, by restructuring the SEA so that service would become a salient function. The story of those changes is a fascinating one described here in an excerpt from the Illinois site report.

> To gain control over the sprawling Springfield education bureaucracy, one of Cronin and Ashline's first acts was to send job notices to over 1,000 employees of the IOE. Unless they earned their jobs back within eight months, they had to leave. Cronin and Ashline also dismantled the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the largest in the IOE. This department was stocked with specialists in curricular areas, such as English, geography, driver education, etc. Most of these people were local educators who had moved up the ladder of school administration. A

number of these staff were "home-based," and little was known of their activities; a study conducted by the University of Illinois showed that 99% of LEA respondents did not even know that these curriculum specialists existed. They then created the LEA Services Division, which housed the state dissemination system, and placed it in an influential position within the SEA hierarchy.

Another move that typified the new leadership was to equalize the salaries of personnel in the new LEA Services Division and the Division of Regulation and Supervision. Those who provided services and wore the "white hats" were given rewards and status equal to those who monitored compliance and wore the "black hats." Previously, the "black hats" had earned the highest salaries in the IOE.

The new relationship between the LEAs and the IOE was shaped by both the carrots of innovation services and the sticks of monitored regulations. The IOE made special efforts to disassociate the "black hats" from the "white hats" in the minds of local school leaders. Under the Bakalis administration which preceded Cronin, when inducements for innovation planning failed, field agents of the IOE resorted to regulations to coax change in administrative practice in local schools. This approach failed, leaving a negative legacy among LEAs for improvement efforts sponsored by the SEA.

Wary of this legacy, the Cronin administration clearly set those who offered the carrots apart from those who wielded the sticks. The Program Service Teams (PSTs) of the LEA Services Division had nothing overtly to do with monitoring compliance. Instead, they sometimes acted as the advocates for a LEA that found itself in jeopardy of being out of compliance with federal or state regulations. A legal model of advocates and adversaries was reflected in comments such as, "When a district is being evaluated, we (LEA Services) act as their advocates. We only go in on their side -- only at their invitation to protect their interests." Agents of the IOE played the roles of both prosecutor and defense lawyer in this adversarial relationship between arms of the same agency. A threat of non-compliance and its related cut-off of funds, was often the impetus for an LEA to seek out a new program from their regional Program Service Team. By setting itself against itself, the SEA combined inducements and threats through clearly distinguished roles in order to stimulate local school improvement efforts. The IOE's dissemination system functioned as one side of a dialectic that attempted to make LEAs more responsive to their policy initiatives.

In essence, the Cronin-Ashline reforms decentralized and regionalized the delivery of services to the LEAs. Through this dissemination system, they redesigned the communication links between the LEAs and Springfield, moving the staff and operations out of the state capital and into five regional areas.

The IOE's reorganization plan consolidated small school districts at the same time as it decentralized the delivery of services. Perhaps the optimal scale of the service delivery unit was mid-range between the big central bureaucracy and the little local school system. Dissemination of information and diffusion of innovations was a crucial function in this new relationship between the decentralized SEA and the consolidated LEAs.

As this slow convergence developed, the new role of the Springfield SEA increasingly focused upon policy planning and implementation. As more day-to-day, administrative tasks were farmed out to the five regions, the IOE's policymakers envisioned the SEA central staff increasingly devoting its energies to the systematic planning and development of policy. To do this, the SEA would have to acquire the analytic skills that could predict the long-range implications of specific policy choices. In this view, the IOE would provide the initiative for policy action in education, and work in conjunction with a similar new breed of technical staff that attended the assemblymen and other policy-relevant groups in the state government. Ashline reflected that in Illinois, "So far we have made half a silk purse out of a sow's ear." To install a rational system of policy planning and development in the IOE was the unmade half of the full silk purse.

Other of the SEAs were also reorganized to make coordinated efforts in school improvement possible. In Maryland, having found that the SEA divisions were virtually "independent fiefdoms," Hornbeck built several "crosswalks" among them to coordinate new initiatives. Project Basic and a management-by-objectives system contributed much to the crosswalks. For example, he created the Instructional Coordinating Council consisting of the seven most strategic people in the SEA: the assistant superintendents in charge of the four instructional divisions (instruction, vocational education, special education, and compensatory, urban, and supplemental programs), the deputy superintendent of schools, the assistant deputy superintendent for Project Basic, and the superintendent himself. Through their involvement with this and other "crosswalks," the roles of the assistant superintendents were expanded rather than contracted. What they lost in exclusive "turf prerogatives" was compensated by what they gained by broader involvement in cross-divisional affairs.

While not allocating new money to Project Basic, Hornbeck redistributed existing monies to finance the new initiative. In addition, he and his staff gathered all the funds for inservice training scattered in the divisions, and took almost half of it to form a Professional Development Academy for principals' in-service. The rest of the money remained but the divisions were required to submit proposals for each inservice training event.

In Arizona, the most significant result of the reorganization of the SEA was the creation of a Basic Skills Unit. In order to create this entity, five existing programs concerned with basic skills acquisition were grouped within one division: ESEA Title I, Right to Read, Bilingual Education, Early Childhood Education, and Continuous Uniform Evaluation Sequence. The mission of the unit was to "provide leadership for the local education agencies in promoting the Arizona Department of Education's adopted goal of emphasizing basic skills." In this conception, SEA leadership involved providing local districts with a basic skills product model and a management process model for coordinating basic skills activities at the local level. At the time of our fieldwork, no additional funding was set aside for this program, but some support was expected in the future. This and other SEA changes, while not major ones, nevertheless represented a step forward for a previously quiescent SEA.

In Pennsylvania, the organizational changes initiated by Secretary Scanlon involved adding a new division of research, planning, and data management and instituting matrix management. In addition to a management team, Scanlon also adopted schemes to promote greater input and flexibility in the departmental decision-making process. Scanlon may have felt a need to employ several alternative management approaches because he commanded a department permeated by a strong civil service system. This clearly limited his staff assignments. As we noted in a previous section, Scanlon tested this system early in his tenure by attempting to remove several department heads protected by civil service. He was rebuffed by the Civil Service Commission, and they were hired back. The School Improvement Program, as we have discussed, was launched without additional financial support, a constraint on its activities.

Neither California nor Michigan saw major reorganization for their school improvement efforts, although special units were created to run the programs.

G. Relationships Between SEA, LEAs, and IUs

As previously stated, four of the six states -- California, Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania -- had intermediate units (IUs). In addition, the countywide LEA system in Maryland was essentially the equivalent of intermediate units.

Michigan had the most complex system of IUs, with 58 Intermediate Service Districts (ISDs), 22 Regional Educational Media Centers (REMCs), 10 Regional Service Centers (RSCs), and 53 Career

Education Planning Districts, as well as planning districts housed in major REMCs for special education, vocational education, and professional development. Although these units often overlapped in clientele and function, each delivered a different repertoire of services to their regions.

The ISDs were established as autonomous units in 1962, taking over many of the functions of county superintendents. ISD service areas, however, were not necessarily coterminous with county boundaries. The REMCs, founded in 1970, provided media materials and services that were too costly or specialized for individual LEAs to get themselves. All REMCs were affiliated with ISDs. The RSCs were funded by Title IV-C monies administered by the SEA to provide technical assistance to LEAs for program improvement. The RSCs were the main service delivery mechanism for the Michigan Adoption Program, one of the SEA's school improvement initiatives.

California also had an extensive network of intermediate units, beginning with the long-established county offices of education. These were not subject to the jurisdiction of the SEA but assisted it in performing regulatory functions (e.g., certification of teachers, LEA budget reviews) as well as providing services. SEA programs, particularly the School Improvement Program, however, often bypassed the county offices, going directly to the district level if not to the local school itself.

Other intermediate units in California were quite diverse in function and style. Some were state supported (e.g., teacher resource centers); some were federally supported (e.g., regional facilitator centers); and some were privately supported (e.g., The Network for School Improvement). In addition, many of the LEAs had chosen to group themselves for both service and administrative purposes. One such grouping, a legal entity labeled a cooperative, was established to facilitate the implementation of Title I programs. A less formal grouping of LEAs, called a consortium, was established in response to the School Improvement Program. These were ad hoc relationships, fluid in their composition, which provided for mutual support activities. The SEA encouraged the formation of consortia because state agency staff were too few to provide all the mechanisms for performing School Improvement Program program reviews and to ensure local supportive environments for meeting the recommendations of the review teams.

Representative of the network of intermediate units in Illinois were the state's seven Illinois Centers for Education Improvement (ICEIs). The ICEIs were relatively independent of the SEA, having their own directors and governing boards. The primary motivation for their creation was the desire for a broader distribution of program resources in order to stimulate innovative responses to specific curriculum areas. They were also intended to encourage greater LEA involvement in planning and needs assessment in conjunction with greater local participation formulating and implementing educational programs. Operationalized in the fall of 1978, the centers were designed both to provide a decentralized

resource link supporting the Program Service Teams (PSTs) and to assist in implementing programs developed by the SEA's Program, Planning and Development Division (PP&D) and/or retrieved from the files of the Illinois Resource and Dissemination Network (IRDN).

In Pennsylvania, intermediate units arose through a consolidation of county school offices which had served as regulatory agencies for their constituent local districts. In 1970, legislation established 29 IUs providing technical assistance to local districts in their designated areas. They were funded partly by state appropriations on a formula based on the number of students served, and partly by local districts for whom they provided direct services in special education. The intermediate units were supposed to play a central role in the SEA's school improvement initiative, working with SEA field agents to provide assistance to local schools. However, some were left out of the initial planning process. Funding issues caused additional friction.

These intermediate units provided important insight into SEA-LEA relationships in these states. In Michigan, for example, IUs, particularly the ISDs and the REMCs, were critical to understanding SEA-LEA relationships. Essentially, the IUs appeared to function as a buffer between the state department and the LEAs. One ISD official stated that the "ISDs often act as buffer advocates for the LEAs against the state." Consistent with this SEA-IU-LEA system of operation, the major SEA role in dissemination appeared to be that of "linker," indirectly connecting LEAs with programmatic and informational resources. Simply stated, the SEA funneled resources to autonomous service-oriented units (REMCs and ISDs), thus allowing the SEA to maintain a service orientation, even though, in fact, there was little direct service delivery to the LEAs. From the perspective of the LEAs, according to ISD staff, locals were confounded by the amount of paperwork required by the SEA and the complexity of their procedures.

Maryland provided an example of quite different SEA-LEA relationships. In this state, each of the 24 counties had its own local education agency. There were twenty-four county superintendents, each reporting to their own boards. Each of these boards, in turn, negotiated with county commissioners for a portion of county revenues. Four had over 100,000 students; eight had fewer than 6,000. Five administered budgets over $40 million each; eight administered budgets under $4 million. Some county central office units were larger and better paid than equivalent SEA units. This diversity in LEAs required SEA flexibility in implementing statewide policies. On the other hand, the small number of LEAs offset, in part, potential difficulties resulting from such diversity and allowed regular informal and formal communication among SEA and LEA officials. This effort to communicate regularly was epitomized by day-long "shirt-sleeve" meetings between the county superintendents and the CSSO held once a month.

A third type of SEA-LEA relationship was found in the one development state in our sample which did not have intermediate units -- Arizona. In this state, friction between the LEAs and SEA appeared to be minimal despite apparent LEA independence. State department of education personnel did not consider local autonomy to be problematic; rather, they viewed it as "the reality in Arizona," a reality which could be worked with comfortably. SEA staff assumed a service orientation and indicated a desire to avoid creating additional mandates which affected LEAs. They viewed their role as one of helping local agencies coordinate compliance activities in order to increase their efficiency in meeting state and federal requirements. The conception was one primarily involving technical assistance rather than enforcement, thereby reducing possible tension in SEA-LEA relationships. However, a growing number of mandates may force the Arizona SEA into a more overtly regulatory role. This, in turn, may disrupt the relatively peaceful SEA-LEA relationship, causing increased tension between the two.

H. Relationships Between the SEA and the Federal Government

Federal-state relations were somewhat better in development SEAs compared to the relationships maintenance SEAs established at this level. Even so, tension in the relationships was a definite reality. Development agencies differed from maintenance agencies in the reasons for this tension, however.

Maintenance SEAs disliked the intrusion of federal action in itself. Development SEAs granted the "right" of federal action, but strained against the picket fence; they tried to bend federal programs to fit and support state initiatives. Development SEAs had other ideas about how federal goals could be achieved in their domains. They saw federal resources as part of the support for their own initiatives and therefore tried to minimize constraints on specific monies for special populations and purposes.

When a conflict occurred, it arose in different ways and for different reasons than in maintenance SEAs. Development SEAs complained that all federal regulations were based on "worst case" SEAs and maintained that the federal government did not realize the progress made by the states since the early days of ESEA. They claimed to be committed to federal priorities and to have incorporated them into their programs. Their interest was not to subvert these priorities but to "do it their way."

Michigan provided an example of the complexity of the federal-state relationships. One SEA official characterized the relationship as proactive in the sense that the state agency actively maneuvered around federal regulations and mandates in order to render them consistent with SEA program goals. For example, according to Title IV-C regulations, Michigan's Regional Supplemental Centers (RSCs) were not allowed to disseminate programs. Therefore, their role was described as one of "serving LEAs" by informing them of available Title IV-C programs which could meet their needs. These RSCs were, in fact, previously

known as regional dissemination centers, a title which was changed so as to avoid conflict with Title IV-C federal regulations prohibiting dissemination.

In contrast to this "proactive" view of the federal-state relation, others in other agencies viewed the relationship as passive. In their view, "the SEA is a funding mechanism for federal funds."

Between these two views was a third position. From this perspective, the relationship was one of "give and take." The SEA did not simply serve as a funneling mechanism for federal funds; it had, at times, challenged federal authority and exercised its prerogatives.

I. Summary of Development SEAs

Six state education agencies in our sample -- Arizona, California, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, and Pennsylvania -- could be classified as development SEAs, based on the same factors used to identify maintenance SEAs. Although these SEAs often manifested their development pattern of organizational behavior in diverse ways, in general they can be characterized in the following manner.

- They were located in the larger states of our sample. With the exception of Arizona, these states were highly industrialized, urbanized states with more pluralistic educational constituencies reflecting their heterogeneous populations.

- With the exception of California, the state share of education revenues for elementary and secondary education was below the national average although in general higher than in maintenance states. The SEA's proportion of education financing grew dramatically over the last several years, bringing with it increased leverage over local districts.

- There had been considerable impetus for educational change from the state legislatures, governors, and occasionally the courts.

- There were a diverse number of education organizations and interest groups operating in the states. Many of these organizations were used to support and/or supplement the school improvement initiatives of the SEAs.

- All had activist chief state school officers.

- The development SEAs were systematically larger and more active than those found in our maintenance states. Four SEAs -- Illinois, Arizona, Maryland, and Pennsylvania -- had undergone extensive reorganization.

- SEA-LEA relationships were reasonably friendly although the SEAs took far more active roles in these relationships relative to the maintenance SEAs.

- Federal-state relationships were somewhat better in comparison to those of maintenance SEAs. However, the development SEAs saw federal resources as part of the support for their own initiatives and therefore tried to minimize federal constraints on how the funds should be spent.

In the next chapter, we build further on the distinction between maintenance and development SEAs. Reexamining our sample, now differentiated according to maintenance and development patterns of organizational behavior, we identify and explore the strategies and activities these SEAs initiated -- influenced by the factors presented in this chapter -- to support their school improvement and dissemination efforts.

CHAPTER 4:

DISSEMINATION IN MAINTENANCE STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

I. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND DISSEMINATION IN SEAS: A TYPOLOGY OF STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

In this chapter, we begin to look at the strategies and activities that SEAs had initiated at the time of our fieldwork in 1979-80. Depending on their individual environments and institutional arrangements, SEAs adopted very different courses of action during the decade of the 1970s.

We have portrayed the school improvement/dissemination efforts of the ten SEAs in Table 2. All the states had categorical program efforts and operations that included dissemination. For the maintenance SEAs in our sample, nearly all dissemination or school improvement activities that took place occurred within the categorical framework. Each program might have had a strategy, but there was no formal coordination across functional divisions of the SEAs. In Section II, we will describe some of these program activities, indicating some of the strategies used by maintenance SEA personnel and others to initiate school improvement/dissemination work in their states.

The development SEAs in the sample had undertaken school improvement strategies that involved at least some coordination across divisions within the SEAs. In the typology in Table 2 we have called these "integrated" SEA school improvement efforts. Development SEAs have gone about school improvement in two different ways: some have focused on setting, even mandating, goals or objectives that districts and schools must achieve, leaving the process for reaching the goals up to the locals. Other SEAs have chosen to specify or require a process that local districts and schools must follow in their school improvement efforts, leaving the objectives up to their discretion. As can be seen in Table 2, Michigan, Maryland, and Arizona are grouped under the objective-focused strategy heading, while Illinois, Pennsylvania, and California fall under the process-focused program strategy rubric.

The development SEAs can also be differentiated in how they have chosen to use dissemination in their improvement strategy and activities. In some SEAs, dissemination both as a concept and as embodied in NDN, Title IV-C, and State Capacity Building programs, has remained to some extent a categorical activity; that is, it is actively pursued, but has not been integrated as a critical component of the SEA's major school improvement plan. We label this use of dissemination -- tactical support. For different reasons, Maryland, California, and Arizona have all used dissemination in this fashion. In contrast, other SEAs have used dissemination as the basis for their school improvement activities. This use of dissemination is referred to here as a generic strategy. Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania fall within this category.

Table 2

TYPOLOGY OF SEA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

As Table 2 indicates whether a SEA is process- or objective-focused does not appear useful in predicting how dissemination will be used by the state agency; there are examples of both process and objective-focused SEAs adopting each of these approaches. Nor do the placement of the NDN state facilitator project or the timing of the State Capacity Building Program grants seem to be predictive factors. Rather, the evolution of SEAs into one type or another seems to be determined largely by the within-state factors we introduced in Chapters 2 and 3.

In Chapter 5, we describe in more detail the school improvement and dissemination activities of the development SEAs in our sample. In that discussion, we will be saying more about objective-focused versus process-focused school improvement programs, and about dissemination as a supporting tactic versus dissemination as a generic strategy.

II. THE ROLE OF DISSEMINATION IN MAINTENANCE SEAs

A. Attitudes Toward Dissemination

State education agencies carry out a broad range of functions (e.g., teacher certification; setting and enforcing curricular standards in many subject areas across twelve or thirteen grades; providing fiscal support to local education agencies; regulating student transportation) and administer a system that serves diverse populations (e.g., the disadvantaged by reason of poverty, ethnic background, or handicapping conditions; the gifted and talented; vocationally oriented and college-bound students). These complexities are reflected in the structure of SEAs. SEAs are complicated bureaucracies with departments, offices, divisions, branches, and projects corresponding to their many specialized responsibilities. Further, as the federal government has mounted initiatives in an ever-widening array of areas, most of them administered at the state level, SEAs have responded by establishing new units to handle the added responsibilities.

The resulting agency frequently seems to be a compromise between two different processes of development. In part, it may be a product of strategic, coherent design by an architect with an understanding of how the units relate to each other and fit with the central purpose of the structure. But the structure also seems to ramble, an accumulation of rooms added on as needed for a family expanding as much by accident as by design.

In maintenance agencies in particular, growth by an accumulation of ad hoc additions appears to be the dominant process. There is little or no coordination among units and each categorical program conducts its own dissemination effort as mandated. Generic dissemination programs such as the NDN state facilitator and the State Capacity Building Program (SCBP) projects become additional rooms in an already complex structure -- if they are a part of the SEA at all. (As Table 2 shows, in two of our four maintenance SEAs, the NDN state facilitator was located outside the agency; three of the four SEAs had no SCBP projects at the time of our fieldwork.)

In our remaining cases, the NDN and SCBP projects had managed to develop an information resource base within the SEA. Some had also managed to develop modest capabilities for linkage. In general, however, these linkage activities were restricted to information linkage and seldom approximated the more active problem-solving assistance which Sieber (1972) reported the Pilot State Dissemination Project field agents commonly offered. While they generally increased the SEA's capabilities to provide information on exemplary practices, R&D products, and related resources in response to queries, the projects remained "just more federal programs," carrying out their functions in relative isolation. Of leadership there was little, and the vision of an SEA employing dissemination as a key element in a strategic program of school improvement that also brings all of the agency's other "resources for change" into play was far away indeed.

In general, the maintenance SEAs in our sample tended to stress the importance of informal communication as the way information really flows both within the agency and between the agency and the local districts. Said one official in South Dakota, "We have a grapevine system among teachers and administrators in this state that would make a prison jealous." Nebraska was characterized as "just one big small town . . . everybody here knows everybody else." South Dakota's Title I director summed up a discussion about dissemination by saying, "You know, when it comes right down to it, the best way to spread any new information in this state is to hang up a notice in the post office." Although a few innovators stressed the importance of new communication technologies for educational dissemination in rural states, the general consensus was that the new technologies were inappropriate in states where educators communicated well enough informally with one another, and with the state agency.

The way SEA officials approached dissemination usually related to the way they viewed the relationship between enforcement and assistance in the SEA's role toward local districts. To the few officials in maintenance SEAs who saw their role in the assistance mode, federal dissemination initiatives were welcome external support. They tended to see the SEA's dissemination role as actively brokering information about innovative programs and practices among local districts. While they had been doing this informally all along, they welcomed the idea of building formal structures or programs to do it on a larger and more systematic basis. In maintenance agencies, these officials were in the minority. For the majority of them, dissemination was usually seen as sending out information about programs to the districts in the form of newsletters, notices, and the like. This was best done by each individual program, not by a new unit that disseminated as its principal function.

For these states, then, dissemination most often meant "awareness" or "the spread of information." There was little emphasis on the later stages of implementation and follow-up. Even the adoption step was viewed as an informal one, with the school or district picking and choosing among elements of a practice or program that

were relevant to them. As the coordinator of the Title IV-C office in Virginia noted, "In Virginia, you have to be talking about adaption; you can't have out-and-out adoptions."

"Dissemination" had a federal ring to it in these agencies. The former chief in Virginia refused to even hear the word because it was so connected to federal programs and because it had some vaguely forbidden association to it. Others were put off by the "jargon" they had to include in the proposals they had to write to get grants for dissemination from Washington. As we have noted, the maintenance SEAs tended to be in the last cohorts of grant recipients in NIE's State Capacity Building Program. In fact, Virginia did not participate at all: when their initial SCBP proposal was rejected by NIE, but accompanied by an offer of a $5,000 planning grant for rewriting it, the chief, who resented having "to march to the federal government's tune," sent a letter to NIE that was reported by his staffer to have simply said, "Shelve it!"

B. Dissemination Activities in Maintenance SEAs

In general, school improvement in maintenance SEAs, where it was not a code word for maintaining the status quo, meant informal activity, spreading ideas by word-of-mouth and peer exchange, usually through the traditional categorical channels. As we observed in our discussion of SEA-LEA relations in the maintenance SEAs, local districts were unconvinced that new ideas or practices developed elsewhere might be relevant to them. Overcoming this attitude becomes the initial challenge of any SEA dissemination effort. Moreover, it is clear that there would be no formal dissemination at all without federal monies, with the exception of one small effort in Virginia, which we will describe below.

In this section, then, we describe selected SEA activities designed to mitigate both the general unwillingness of LEAs to experiment, especially with external ideas, and their specific reluctance to accept intervention from the SEA level. Through excerpts from the site reports, activities are portrayed, first in Nebraska, then South Dakota, Maine, and finally, Virginia. The reader should come away with a sense of how dissemination and school improvement can be approached through categorical programs as well as how enterprising SEA staff have managed to work around within-state constraints to encourage school improvement.

1. Nebraska

Although Nebraska has no statewide reform policies or programs, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDOE) and the educational service units (ESUs) sponsor some school improvement activities. In the categorical areas of the NDOE, a broad range of approaches are employed, achieving an equally broad range of effects; some of these are described below. A dissemination unit was recently

established within the commissioner's office to coordinate dissemination activities throughout the agency. Headed by the Nebraska state facilitator, a self-proclaimed "lone arranger," the unit has two staff and its "coordination" consists primarily of operating the state facilitator project and the State Capacity Building Program project.

NDN State Facilitator Project. In her two years as Nebraska's state facilitator, this SEA official has energized a dormant program. The SF was formerly located in Iowa. Now within the NDOE, this relatively small operation ($40,000), infused with the current SF's missionary zeal, has become the single most dynamic force for change in the agency.

The state facilitator's primary mission is to create awareness of the NDN and SF services. She deliberately builds contacts within the department, and makes many presentations in the field, meeting with principals, librarians, and graduate school classes. Her major vehicle for reaching teachers is the yearly "Classroom Updates," statewide in-service colloquia sponsored by the NDOE Division of Instruction. This program conducts 50 workshops in a variety of subjects, and regularly attracts over 1000 teachers from throughout the state. She also works extensively through "mini-linkers" in the ESUs. ESU mini-linkers have already conducted fourteen awareness conferences and plans call for several more next year.

The state facilitator's activism stands out in the passive NDOE. Unlike Commissioner Campbell, whose informal, low-key style wins converts over time, the state facilitator promotes innovation, and attracts supporters through her limitless energy and sincerity. To many, her brazen style is threatening but most appreciate her vigor and brash assumption of control. As she makes her presence known, criticisms from her detractors diminish, and her influence over the laissez-faire attitude of the department expands rapidly. The NDN has a tough row to hoe in Nebraska. As one NDOE official put it, "People here just aren't convinced that a program developed in Arkansas can possibly work in Nebraska." Convincing local educators that others' ideas may have relevance for their own schools takes extensive time and energy, both of which the state facilitator is willing to devote to the project.

State Capacity Building Program Project. The State Capacity Building Program effort, titled SNICER, began in 1977. Its purpose is to disseminate computer-based and locally generated information. SNICER has contracted with SMERC in San Mateo, California to conduct information searches, leaving the NDOE-based director

free to expand the program in and outside the Department. Like the state facilitator, SNICER's director has been trying to increase awareness of the project's services. She meets regularly with representatives from each NDOE program to explore their use of information services.

The SCBP project encounters recalcitrance similar to that faced by the state facilitator; people often cannot accept the possibility that something new might benefit them. Within the NDOE, the director has purposely avoided formal coordination links because, "they don't want anyone getting too close -- they're all so protective of their own little piece of turf." In the field, she has difficulty getting locals to contribute fugitive documents (curricula, etc.) to the information bank because "many just can't see what's in it for them." She has identified volunteer linkers in 100 LEAs, providing the project with more direct exposure to locals. Through a special grant from ERIC, the project recently sponsored a training workshop in the use of computer-based information systems for 300 educators of one district.

Title IV-C. In addition to funding locally developed innovations, Title IV-C has several dissemination functions. The program funds the adoption of projects that have been validated through either the state or the federal Joint Dissemination Review Panel. Title IV-C has a staff of six, one of whom is specifically responsible for dissemination assistance. They are concerned about the range and quality of applications, both for development and adoption funding. "People in this state aren't too forward thinking," commented a staff member, "it's difficult to get them to consider innovation of any type." In addition, local spending caps have prohibited LEAs from applying for federal funds for fear that they will not be able to continue when the grant expires.

Funding Title IV-C Adopter Grants has been particularly frustrating. Locals don't seem to understand the state's intentions in promoting the spread of exemplary programs. Title IV-C staff report that many applications for adopter grants read, in effect, "We have a reading/math/drug problem; please send the maximum amount of money ($25,000) and we'll do what you want." Without question, the SF project makes the most effective use of the adopter grants. With its own small budget, the SF project depends on the small number of IV-C grants to promote NDN adoptions. Said the Title IV-C director, "My foremost recommendation to the federal government is that they give those people (NDN) enough resources to carry out their mandate. I'm pleased to be able to support [the state facilitator's] operation, and we have established a terrific inter-relationship of our programs,

programs, but she is forced to depend on us for money." Had the recent recisions included Title IV-C, the entire SF project would have fallen on hard times.

Identification, Validation, and Dissemination (IVD). Nebraska is in the first year of a regional IVD process, with six contiguous states. So far, eight projects have applied, four have been selected for formal review, and only two have been nominated for submission to the IVD process. The Title IV-C director heads a NDOE task force to expand validation to include areas other than Title IV-C, such as Title I, Vocational Education and Special Education. In its first year, however, the task force has achieved limited success, and in the director's words, "we're only starting to get our act together."

Vocational Education. Dissemination activity in vocational education is concentrated in the Vocational Materials Center in Kearney, which collects and distributes information throughout the state, and in the Research Coordinating Unit at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, which disseminates materials regarding its research activities. It is not at all coordinated with other NDOE dissemination programs. Said one Vocational Materials Center staffer, "Who's gonna know anything about truck driver courses over there?"

2. South Dakota

Formal school improvement activity in South Dakota is almost nonexistent. Having developed no comprehensive programs at the statewide level, the South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs (DECA) promotes school improvement strictly on a categorical basis. Change strategies vary across programs, linked only by a common observance of the sanctity of local control. As the CSSO's Annual Report of Educational Progress begins, "The schools belong to the people!" The SEA does not assume a proactive role in influencing local educational affairs. Its purpose is to enforce the law, not to impose reforms. All DECA programs reflect this creed and few have assumed an assistance function that actively encourages LEAs to expand and improve their operations.

When the SEA does provide services it is done informally through interpersonal connections. Because the education system is so small, practically all local and state administrators know one another. Many wear several administrative hats, and encounter one another regularly at different statewide conferences. For example, the principal of a South Dakota LEA may also be the Title I director and the vocational education liaison. Attending conferences for each of these three areas, he will

interact with LEA peers and SEA officials in different roles several times each year. In addition, because of the small numbers, information travels quickly. The SEA director of special education pointed out,

> There are only 191 local special education officials in the entire state, and each knows everything about programs and politics everywhere. We have a grapevine system among teachers and administrators in South Dakota that would make a prison jealous.

The program operations of DECA reflect the ethos of informality and interpersonal interaction. Improvement strategies, when they exist, are based on building communication networks to spread information through personal channels. To South Dakotans, dissemination most often takes the form of informal exchange of ideas among colleagues and friends. Sharing new programs and strategies over a beer may be a significant means of promoting school improvement.

Although DECA programs operate independently along federal categorical lines, a small amount of informal cooperation does occur. Because of the agency's small staff and administrative budget, dissemination activities are often carried out jointly.

Title IV-C and the NDN State Facilitator Project. The entire Title IV-C and NDN state facilitator staff is comprised of a single individual. This SEA official tried to establish a dissemination "system" in the state, but limited resouces and an unexcited client base have kept his successes to a minimum. The DECA has recently tried to extend the state validation system to draw in other categorical interests, but little has been done beyond agreeing "to talk about it some more."

Title IV-C does have a validation process, but, like most everything else in the state, it has been informal and unsystematic. Until recently, when Identification, Validation, and Dissemination (IVD) was adopted, a program could be validated for statewide dissemination simply by receiving three favorable reviews by SEA personnel and Title IV-C advisory board members. Still, only two projects have ever been validated, and only one of these has received any interest from other LEAs. As the state facilitator explained, "In South Dakota it takes a long while for a school district to go after anything new."

The state facilitator project is a small operation ($49,000) with limited objectives. The state facilitator has to coordinate the SF project with Title IV-C (through small adoptor grants), Title I (piggybacking onto awareness conferences), and other programs, in order to have any effect at all. Most of the project activities

are administered by four school districts which serve as "sub-networks." Nominated by the SF for their progressiveness and credibility in the field, these four LEAs function as "mini-facilitators" with full budgetary and programmatic authority. In operation only one year, this system appears to be effective, with adoptions multiplying rapidly. Officials throughout the SEA emphasized that successful school improvement activities in South Dakota depend primarily on the use of respected and familiar peers in the role of change agent. Although small and relatively powerless, the SF program has begun to incorporate this strategy with positive effect.

Dissemination in other categorical programs most usually is part of technical assistance activities. Inservice activities often include traditional dissemination practices. Most communication about new programs and resources occurs incidentally at monitoring and auditing visits to LEA sites. Some Title I and special education staff disseminate new knowledge informally, at local request, usually to correct deficiencies rather than to expand efficiency. Vocational education is piloting a computerized information system of exemplary programs and products. They are also building collaboratives among LEAs throughout the state to share knowledge and resources about vocational education. Most dissemination of vocational information, however, is still conducted through the Cooperative Extension Service.

3. Maine

The involvement of the Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services (MDECS) in dissemination has occurred largely in response to federal initiatives. Thus, it is tied to categorical programs located primarily in three divisions of the department: the Division of Federal Programs, which houses Title I and Title IV-C; the Bureau of Vocational Education; and the Division of Curriculum, which houses special education, teacher certification, and several other programs. The refrain one hears when talking with officials from these divisions is that the state must be careful to operate within the context of local control. The way this is translated within each of the SEA's major program areas is described below.

Title IV-C. Although the MDECS has no coordinated statewide dissemination plan, it employs a "state disseminator." That position is in the Title IV-C office, which handles most of the department's present dissemination effort. The man occupying that post defines his dissemination function as "linking information, resources, and services with consumers" ("services" added almost as an afterthought). He saw the

state's role as that of a clearinghouse or referral service, matching people and services.

Specific Title IV-C activities include holding four grant writing workshops each year, open to anyone, but intended for superintendents or building principals who require assistance. In addition, the Title IV-C office provides technical assistance during on-site visits. The director of the Title IV-C office felt the department was "seen as helpful" (the only official who did not feel the department had a bad reputation because of its regulatory function).

Title IV-C officials award money for developmental projects (and possible future continuation grants for two additional years), demonstration projects, adoptive grants, and mini-grants. The demonstration projects are validated at the state level in the third year, for a fourth and fifth year of funding. During the two project site visits, state officials look for indications of the projects' effectiveness/success (based on its own objectives), cost effectiveness, and exportability. Specifically, projects are validated according to the following criteria: educational significance, target population, materials, equipment, and facilities, staff and training requirements, minimum adoption requirements, replication costs, and special problems.

The Title IV-C office has maintained close ties with the Maine facilitator center. For several years, Title IV-C money was given to the facilitator center to support NDN adoptions, but the legislation has been amended so that such a practice is now designated as illegal and has been discontinued. However, close cooperation with the state facilitator continues.

Which new programs are developed, demonstrated, or adopted are influenced by several considerations. One is a number of state laws concerning education, including a provision for education for the gifted and talented, and one that stresses arts and humanities. Although state funds are available in these areas, there appears to be no dissemination effort connected with them. In addition, there is legislation concerned with reducing the number of school dropouts, and with competency in basic skills. Thus, programs sometimes focus on these areas in response to the legislation.

Notably, Title IV-C officials stated that the state does not determine priorities in terms of specific program emphases, but instead funds programs according to the quality of the underlying concept of the proposal. One official referred to the federal mandate that 15% of funds be set aside for programs for the handicapped, and noted that such a mandate has the effect of having

projects funded that might not have been funded otherwise. The implication is that they might not be as well designed as other, non-handicapped projects, and that they might not really address the areas of greatest need for the district involved. The state, this official declared, wants to encourage locals to write proposals not because they are popular that year, but because they will be of real value to the districts.

In contrast to this "official" position, one key observer, formerly a superintendent of schools in a district in Maine, commented that, in fact, strict priorities did exist, at least during the years he was there (1974-76). He felt that local districts quickly learned to write proposals that corresponded to the priorities -- the kind of situation he wanted to avoid. This observer also said the department was concerned with distributing money equitably. A district that had been funded before might not get funded again, simply because the department wanted to spread the money around. If so, a policy of distributing funds would seem to be a logical outgrowth of a department that sees itself as having limited power constrained by pressures of local control.

Whether or not the state does have priorities, the Title IV-C office felt the need to speak of local control, even to an audience more likely associated with the federal government than with the local districts. Deference to local control characterizes the Title I office, as well.

Title I. Also administered through the Division of Federal Programs, the Title I office has considered dissemination a low priority item. "You can't keep pulling money out of programs for dissemination," one official declared.

That same Title I official described dissemination in terms of referring people to other people, a definition similar to that given by Title IV-C officials. He said, "The best thing is when you can say to someone, 'Oh, so-and-so in the next district is doing that; why don't you give him a call.'" (As noted earlier, the commissioner used a very similar phrase in describing the success of the facilitator center.) The official was proud of the technical assistance Title I offers. Although he felt the state is seen as an enforcer, he sees his office as going beyond a regulatory function to providing help by heading off problems (such as infractions of the regulations) before they occur. The reason for this approach is that people will take suggestions, whereas they are reluctant to follow orders. However, he pointed out that the shoestring budget limits the amount of technical assistance his office can give.

This same Title I official believed that, ideally, a more coordinated dissemination effort would be more efficient than separate categorical efforts. But he feared the greater distance between local school people and state officials that a centralized structure would create. What makes the present structure work right now, he felt, was that program specialists have developed important contacts with people and have acquired a valuable store of knowledge about the people they have been working with intimately. This kind of informal, intimate information cannot be transferred easily or clearly in a centralized system in which the central unit requires formal information from each categorical division.

In addition, the official was concerned that a more coordinated effort might involve the possible misuse of funds. The spending of Title I money is strictly regulated, and Title I staff in the past resisted efforts to use their money for dissemination across programs in ways they considered illegal. As a result, some tensions developed within the SEA. Thus, questions of turf, resting in large part on accountability, and special expertise and personal contacts, have been factors in maintaining a categorical structure.

Title I dissemination activities involve newsletters, running workshops, and informing Title I districts of workshops other people are running. These focus on changes in regulations, technical assistance, and filling out forms. In terms of program adoptions, most involve reading -- the largest being a practice called ECRI (from the Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction) -- and math, with the NDN very much involved.

In contrast to the replication model of dissemination in the Title IV-C office, the Title I official stressed the need to adapt new programs to the framework already in place. He pointed out that many Title I programs have existed for 10 years. "They won't change their basic foundation," he said. "With the bricks and mortar in place, you have to work with that. You can't take a whole program and replicate it in some of these sites." In particular, he noted the commitment to personnel, and said local districts will adopt or modify techniques, but they won't set up new structures. This official also suggested that the techniques will work best -- in fact, will be used at all -- only if they're close to home, as in the case of the facilitator center.

Thus, Title I officials favor a brokerage role, although dissemination is not a high priority. The amount of state activity is limited by the belief that local districts will resist having decisions imposed on them, as well as by scarce resources. But the brokerage function, to be effective, relies on an informal network of personal contacts. A similar concept underlies the dissemination approach of the special education division.

Special Education. Officials in special education spoke of dissemination in terms of bottom-up ownership, and stated that change takes place at the grass-roots level. They emphasized the process of change and the need to help local systems help themselves become independent, without imposing experts from the outside. (Interestingly, however, one individual admitted to wondering whether that was "an ivory tower notion.")

In carrying out this problem-solving approach, these officials see the state's primary dissemination function in terms of brokerage. They want to capitalize on the informal networks that exist in the state and that help dissemination by allowing people to "know who's who and who's doing what." But they also recognize the need to develop a more formal, systematic way of sharing information. Implicit in this recognition is the possibility that informal networks may be ineffective because they are haphazard. Removing barriers and collaborating are important, particularly given the limited resources available, in order to develop common priorities and to spend funds most efficiently.

However, officials in the division resisted some attempts to collaborate in the past. Like Title I, special education is governed by precise regulations that limit the way certain departmental functions are specified. And like Title I officials, special education leaders have applied a "strict constructionist" philosophy to the regulations, interpreting them quite literally.

The Division of Special Education has been involved in three activities that concern dissemination, and all involve professional development. First, in response to the federal mandate of P.L. 94-142, the division has begun to develop a Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD), which emphasizes local initiatives for staff development. (Not only do officials carry out the regulations literally, but they took verbatim from the regulations the phrase "comprehensive system for personnel development" and institutionalized it.) The CSPD plan involves needs assessment, in-service, dissemination, and technical assistance. The division has just created a new position for a coordinator for this effort.

The division has also been involved with the Division of Teacher Education Field Services in a program with the BEH-funded National Inservice Network (NIN). Based at Indiana University at Bloomington, NIN "has developed a network among BEH funded projects, existing regional networks, SEAs, and LEAs for the purpose of dissemination, knowledge utilization, and professional development of regular classroom teachers in the skill areas dealing with exceptionality." The Maine program involves six districts each of three years, beginning 1978-79.

Finally, the Division of Special Education administers funds from BEH that support a liaison between the division and the Mid-Coast Teachers' Center. Here again, the focus is on staff development in the area of special education.

In all these activities, the division engages in brokerage, relying on informal networks, and encouraging local autonomy by helping local systems develop their own procedures to bring about change through staff development. Using strict regulations as its excuse, the division does not attempt to give direction to LEAs. In regard to strict regulations, the Bureau of Vocational Education perceives a similar constraint.

Bureau of Vocational Education. In the Bureau of Vocational Education, the mechanism for change is the development of exemplary programs, as part of the bureau's federal mandate. However, responsibility for dissemination has been left largely with each program effort, and has not been coordinated on a statewide basis.

Like the special education and Title I offices, the bureau has felt restricted by tight federal regulations. As a result, the bureau's role is often regulatory. Moreover, according to one official, the federal mandate does not leave a great deal of flexibility or autonomy for the LEAs, to which he added, "It's too stringent now; we need more autonomy."

Nevertheless, in areas where the state has had the opportunity to exercise more authority, its dissemination effort has still been quite limited.

Other Dissemination Activities in Maine. According to the State Capacity Building Program proposal, the MDECS is involved in dissemination in at least five other areas. At the most basic level is the rudiment of an information resource base, the ERIC file, housed in the Maine State Library. However, use of the ERIC system is minimal.

The Division of Federal Programs is responsible for another activity, the Maine Assessment of Educational Progress (MAEP), which generates information potentially relevant to school improvement. Begun in 1972, the MAEP is a statewide assessment of students of different ages in ten academic subject areas, in order to provide recommendations to improve instruction both in public schools and in teacher training institutions. However, application of the results of this research to practice has been haphazard, and funding for future assessment is in question.

Within the Bureau of Instruction, the Curriculum Division encompasses several categorical program areas which are concerned with information sharing and have developed their own informal networks toward that end. The programs include Right to Read, Career Education, Metric Education, Bilingual Education, Substance Abuse Prevention, and others. Here, again, little coordinated planning occurs to connect information to practice.

Another dissemination activity at the state level is located in the Division of Teacher Education and Field Services. It involves setting standards for and providing assistance to LEAs establishing local professional development systems.

The SEA developed an option whereby districts can substitute their own local professional development system for the standard procedure by which the state certifies teachers. Teachers in the exempted district may submit proposals for staff development to a local committee that is responsible for an overall school improvement plan for the district. This is intended to encourage long-range systemwide planning, as well as new ideas for in-service training beyond the accumulation of college credit hours. The SEA provides assistance to districts in implementing the self-evaluation part of the accreditation process, and disseminates information to teachers for planning innovative professional development activities. The basic idea is to delegate the power of accreditation to the district, and have the SEA facilitate the planning process. Responsive to the "fervent localism" in his state, the SEA official working on this said, "The more we can put the real decision-making responsibility in the hands of the people who are closest to the problems, the better off we really are."

Professional development is also the focus of one final dissemination activity mentioned in the Capacity Building proposal. The state of Maine, through the SEA, is a member of the National Council of States on Inservice Education. The council's major objective is to assist states that are trying to improve "coordination and collaboration of inservice and professional development efforts." In Maine, council support has been used for consultants to several activities under the Division of Special Education.

In summary, the MDECS has undertaken a variety of dissemination activities, most tied to categorical programs and federal mandates. The activities include information sharing, staff development, and adoption/adaptation of exemplary programs. In all these activities, officials throughout the department have accepted a limited role and have not attempted to implement a state-wide effort. Recently, however,

several got together specifically to develop a more coordinated effort, which was written into the State Capacity Building Program proposal to NIE.

4. Virginia

Before looking at the limited dissemination activities in Virginia, it is worth reiterating here the emphasis on local control in this state. In keeping with this, many officials wondered aloud whether there was anything either the state or the federal government could do to bring about change. Thus, for example, one official speculated that the state-supported Pilot Studies Program probably achieved greater success (defined as the percentage of programs that continue when original funding ends) than federally-funded programs such as Title IV-C. The reason, he suggested, was the locals' commitment to the project, not the actual amount or impact of the dollar. The effect of such a philosophy is to keep to a minimum state efforts to bring about change, per se.

Title IV-C. Title IV-C is the center of most of Virginia's dissemination activities. The Title IV-C office consists of three professional staff and one support staff member. Its coordinator oversees the finances and day-to-day operations of the office. He is aided by two other professional staff, one involved with the dissemination activities, the other concerned with program evaluations. All make on-site visits and deal with the localities. A support staffer handles publications.

According to the coordinator, the Title IV-C office works with $3 million a year. The normal funding period for projects is three years, with a fourth year occasionally funded when there are special circumstances, such as going before the JDRP. Title IV-C funds are spent on innovative projects (104 completed since 1970; no figure on how many are presently operating), and adopter projects (43 adoption grants have been awarded, with a total of $300,000 spent on adopters, the average cost being about $4500 and the upper limit $10,000). The three-year innovative and exemplary projects have no restrictions whatsoever on content, according to the coordinator. They are funded on the basis of whether they meet state and local needs, as determined by the localities' six-year plans. The largest number of projects is in the area of gifted and talented programs, followed by guidance and career education, special education, staff development, psychomotor development, and basic skills, and with one or two in an assortment of other areas. Of Virginia's 141 school divisions, 110 have been involved with exemplary projects, either developing or adopting them.

In addition to working on nationally validated projects with the state facilitator, Virginia has had a state validation process since 1972, in which "a successful project can receive recognition as exemplary and worthy of adaptation by other school divisions." (Profiles of ESEA Title IV-C Projects in Virginia, November 1979, p. x; emphasis added.) State validation requires evaluation and approval by an out-of-state team of educators. Projects must be in their third year of operation and must be assured of full funding by the LEA in their fourth year, to qualify. Once validated, a project may receive as many as three additional years of Title IV-C funding for dissemination activities. Twelve projects have received state validation since the process was instituted.

The funding procedure begins with a "superintendent's memo" (or "sup's memo") informing the localities of the four regional Title IV-C meetings, held in the south, southwest, north, and west. At those meetings, representatives from the school divisions are informed of any changes since the previous year and about priorities and scheduled events. Divisions that do not send representatives are informed by letter. Localities then submit their proposals, which are first reviewed and checked against the LEA's six-year plans, and then are forwarded to the Title IV-C office. Officials there read the proposals and decide which reviewers should read them. Reviewers consist of three SEA members and two members of the advisory council. Eventually they will draw up a priority list, send it to the advisory council and then to the four assistant superintendents, and finally to the state superintendent for a decision. After that, negotiations begin over funding, and a detailed proposal is submitted (the initial proposal does not include specifics of the evaluation design). As for funding, the state has instituted a system of decreasing the ratio of federal to local participation over the three year funding cycle, so the localities are involved early and must show their commitment.

The Title IV-C coordinator mentioned with some pride that since 1966, 85% of the localities that have been funded have picked up the project with local funds after federal funds have dried up. This statement was contradicted by another official, although he didn't have figures to support his view. Nevertheless, this official indicated that a very small proportion of projects last. To clarify the Title IV-C coordinator's point, he did note that the school divisions don't necessarily continue the programs intact. They may continue only a component, or they may vary some aspect, such as the administration. As emphasized above, adaptation is the underlying philosophy.

Finally, Title IV-C holds an annual awareness conference, co-sponsored by the Council on Higher Education. Title IV-C projects are "strongly encouraged," in one Title IV-C staff member's words, to have a display, and though there is no quantification of numbers of districts that adopt or adapt programs they have seen at such conferences, "you can hear when you go out in the field" that the conferences have an effect, according to the Title IV-C coordinator. According to the staff member, sometimes people in one school district or division are interested in a program from another and will approach that district directly. However, Title IV-C officials ask to see any materials developed by locals before distribution. The state pays for the cost of distribution.

Vocational Education. The SEA's vocational education program is huge; indeed, it comprises a section of its own within the Curriculum and Instruction Division. The director oversees a total of $179 million in total expenditures. Federal money is just over $16 million per year; the state kicks in $45 million, split between categorical need (direct reimbursements or administrative costs, equipment, teacher education) and full time equivalent additional money (teachers' salaries, supplies, things that are beyond regular classrooms). Expenditures from local school divisions total over $100 million. Theoretically, 100% of operating costs are paid for by state and local funds, not federal funds.

Vocational education is big in Virginia. According to the 1972 State Standards of Quality, every school division must provide vocational education. Each locality has a vocational education director, or someone who serves in that function. The directors within each of Virginia's seven regions elect one of their members to represent them on a local directors advisory council, which meets quarterly with the director of vocational education; representatives then bring back information to their regional meetings. Within the state department, there are 80 staffers throughout the state; program area superintendents are the people primarily who work directly with the localities. Along with almost daily contact by phone, there are 5 on-site visits per year by an evaluation team.

Much of the dissemination the director spoke of concerns information management and flow. There are several packages of acronyms for these various systems. (There is a Vocational Education Reporting System, or VERS, for which each locality has a coordinator; a Vocational Educational Data System, or VEDS; and a Vocational Education Management System, or VEMS. Then there is the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, or NOICC, which requires each state to set up a State

Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, or SOICC; so Virginia has a VOICC, which coordinates information for 4 agencies in the governor's office. The primary users are vocational educators and CETA sponsors.) Finally, the department also issues an occasional publication, Virginia Voc. Ed. Voice, now in its third issue.

However, the director's "number one priority" is the VETECS program, which stands for Vocational Education in Technical Education Consortium of States and which involves 17 states and the armed services. Virginia has been involved for 5 years and is a charter member. The consortium is a collection of states that got together to coordinate the process of developing curriculum materials, thereby decreasing expenses. Each state pays an annual membership fee and agrees to produce a certain number of catalogues describing occupational performance tasks within a specified time period. These are then distributed to the other members. The performance tasks are compiled by asking people in various occupations about the specific duties they perform. A total of 70 occupations are being catalogued. The director noted that these catalogues don't say how to teach the tasks, so all the states agreed not to distribute the catalogues until teachers were trained to use them.

In Virginia, every vocational education program is expected to use the VETECS system by 1982, unless it's not available in an occupational area of interest. The vocational education director has coordinated the necessary teacher training under agreement with the other states. He sent 18 teacher education teachers from various colleges to Atlanta to a training center there to bring back the training program and apply it to teachers in the state. Those people are now holding training sessions for local directors and instructors on how to teach the tasks. In addition, the colleges and universities have set up courses for credit for preservice for beginning teachers, and for inservice, for experienced teachers.

In addition, the vocational education department has funded three localities where the entire county is going to develop curriculum materials for programs they offer. Each is working on a different program, and all will be made available statewide.

Finally, in keeping with the emphasis on curriculum development, the department has set up a satellite curriculum center through the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). Although an extension of the state vocational education department, it is managed through VCU because of the governor's hiring freeze.

Pilot Studies. If there were no federal funds supporting dissemination activities in Virginia, one very small state-funded effort would remain. Within the Division of Research, Evaluation and Testing is the Pilot Studies Program "in which local school divisions are reimbursed up to 50 percent of the cost of certain materials and services required in a research study." (Pilot Studies Program: A Manual of Procedures, March 1978, p. v). A pilot study is defined as "a research and/or development project designed to seek answers to problems in education, to develop new knowledge about important education problems and to demonstrate how research findings can be applied to education" (p. 1). The four objectives of the program are:

1. Encourage local school divisions to test new methods and materials in a controlled research setting.

2. Publicize findings and innovative methods and materials found successful by some divisions so that all divisions may consider application of these.

3. Increase the research competency of public school personnel.

4. Encourage a research climate in which public school personnel will perceive educational problems and attempt to find answers to these problems through experimentation.

The Pilot Studies Program has a staff of one -- the supervisor -- and she is the program. All contacts with local people are through her, both in person and by phone. With a current budget of $300,000 for the 1978-80 biennium, she funded 37 projects last year. Although the state may fund up to 50% of the research effort, in fact it may contribute much less because school boards often vote more money when local projects get the state's endorsement.

The state has encouraged LEAs to consider studies that relate to the general assembly's Standards of Quality, but almost every proposed study is funded, provided it is well designed, has sufficient local funding, has potential statewide application, and concerns an area that has not been studied previously in quite the same way. Among studies presently under way, most concern minimum competency, basic skills, alternative education (both for gifted and talented students and for dropouts), staff development, and educational information systems.

The procedure begins with each locality defining the problems it has and wants to solve. It then discusses them with the SEA and writes a proposal with a strong research component. The state reviews the proposal through a review panel, composed of members of the SEA and possibly some local people, and makes recommendations regarding strengthening the proposal. These recommendations go to the supervisor of the Pilot Studies Program, who contacts the local people and suggests various changes. She described the locals as very cooperative; they "almost always go along with these changes," and she works with them until they have improved their proposal. Then the proposal is funded, for a year at a time, although the state encourages three-year projects or occasionally five-year projects. At the end of each year in the funding cycle the LEA submits an end-of-year status report to the SEA. The SEA reviews that report and perhaps suggests more changes. At the end of a project, a final report is issued and "if findings are sufficient to warrant publication (i.e., if there are significant differences between experimental and control groups in the study, or if the study is timely) or there's an unsuccessful effort," the results are writen up into abstracts, containing information on who sponsored the project and basic information about the project. Then LEAs make arrangements directly with one another if they are interested in considering a program they read about in the abstracts.

At least 40% of all the divisions in the state have participated; half have participated more than once since 1962. The Pilot Studies Program has funded a total of 248 studies.

The head of the Pilot Studies Program holds a research conference every year (and has done so for the past 12 years) during which pilot studies in progress, usually in their second or third year, give presentations. She says the conference has become well known and generates quite a bit of excitement. The people likely to attend are those involved in reseach and instruction, college people, public school people, and some evaluation consultants and lay people, whom she notifies by mail.

The Pilot Studies Program is in no way regulatory. It is purely service delivery and assistance. The director's criteria for success are (1) installment (whether or not a program lasts beyond the funding of the study), (2) the enthusiasm of the people in the division whether or not the program is installed, (3) the degree to which the objectives are obtained and the kinds of changes that take place, and (4) the influences which occur elsewhere and the other studies inspired by them.

III. IMPLICATIONS OF THE MAINTENANCE PATTERN FOR SEA ACTIVITY IN DISSEMINATION AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In reading the site report excerpts concerning SEA dissemination activities in Nebraska, South Dakota, Maine, and Virginia, the diversity of the SEA responses to conditions of their individual settings comes through loud and clear. However, underlying the uniqueness of the activities are similar responses to common themes. Those themes, to summarize the discussion of the last few chapters, include heavy emphasis on local control, limited SEA personnel and resources, a history of minimal SEA role whether in service or enforcement, and few other forces (e.g., legislative, gubernatorial, or court-initiated) for change in the status quo.

As the site reports emphasize, most dissemination in these SEAs occurred through categorical program activities. For the most part, the efforts concerned simple dissemination rather than school improvement; moreover, recalling the IPOD distinction between one-way spread of information and two-way dialogue that includes knowledge use or implementation of new practices and the like, dissemination in these SEAs took the first form at the time of our fieldwork. Awareness was the name of the game.

In the face of the local control ethos, the SEAs were ambivalent about any intervention in local schools, but they did go about their minimal monitoring responsibilities. The lack of legitimacy for an expanded set of responsibilities, coupled with low resources and small staffs, had effectively reduced the sphere of action to a minimal domain.

Precisely because of the small numbers of both SEA and LEA personnel, there was a great amount of multiple-hat wearing at all levels of the state education system. For example, in South Dakota, the NDN state facilitator was also the head of Title IV-C operations in the state agency. And, to make the best use of limited resources, this official often participated in Title I awareness conferences. Out of necessity, these types of informal role and activity coordination occurred in other maintenance SEAs as well and it is tempting to view them as examples of a kind of ad hoc matrix management where information does circulate more effectively, albeit informally.

Indeed, as we discussed in an earlier section, informality was the key to the spread of information and even of innovations in these states. While clearly the social culture, small population, and so on, have a lot to do with this stance on the part of the SEA, ambivalence about the legitimacy of its actions and lack of capacity also play their part. It may be that formal systems are not necessary and might be counter-productive, but at least one SEA program -- the special education staff in Maine -- recognized that informal networks are likely to be haphazard, and indicated the desirability of a more structured effort.

Another common response of these SEAs was to stress adaptation rather than adoption. Perhaps the strongest example of this was in Virginia, but it was echoed in the other state agencies as well. Rather than believing that replication of practices in local schools is impossible in these states because of unique characteristics, we contend that emphasis on adaptation is another example of maintenance SEAs' deference to local educators.

Where maintenance SEAs do exert control is in regulation, as we have seen. In several of the states, this has caused image problems, even though the interference is probably less than that experienced by LEAs in the jurisdiction of a development SEA. Moreover, officials in the maintenance SEAs uniformly adopted strict -- often literal -- interpretations of federal regulations governing categorical programs, thus often precluding possibilities of coordination of more than a minimal sort. Indeed, as we saw in the profile excerpts, most of the SEA programs stood in isolation, particularly vocational education which appears in most states to shun coordination or collaboration with others.

The final and most important general point about dissemination in maintenance SEAs is that, without federal funds and directives, there would be no activities of this nature at all. While the NDN and SCBP projects, in the SEA or out, are modest enterprises, they nonetheless represent capacity that could be put to use in a directed manner should the SEA ever want to focus its efforts in a particular direction. The danger is that these small spare rooms on the house that is the SEA might be allowed to fall into disrepair or to disappear altogether. This has in fact happened to all too many SCBP projects; "generalized dissemination capacity" appears to be all too vulnerable. It has <u>not</u> happened to the NDN state facilitator projects, no doubt in large part because the federal funding for them continues, but also because they represent a different kind of dissemination, at once more activist and flexible in approach, thus able to adapt to local conditions.

Given the set of influences with which they must cope and the pattern of responses developed by maintenance SEAs, what general types of options can they exercise to promote dissemination and school improvement efforts?

Selected Options for Maintenance SEAs in School Improvement

In this section, we want to offer for consideration some general types of roles and options maintenance state education agencies might adopt in school improvement. They are ideal types, based in part on the site report data and in part on observations of activity in other SEAs that exhibit maintenance patterns of behavior. Because of its division into discrete programs, an SEA might be able to simultaneously play more than one role, but in general, we are discussing overall SEA styles.

1. Non-interference

In this most minimal role, the SEA continues to operate as an administrative/regulatory agency without service functions, except as provided through categorical programs -- to correct deficiencies and bring districts into compliance with the regulations. However, the SEA does not inhibit the more service-oriented activities of other education organizations within the state. In Maine, for example, the chief state school officer talked about SEA leadership as "setting a tone," without planning intervention at the local level. Although not active itself, the SEA also did not hamper the efforts of other agencies within the state -- the NDN state facilitator project and a teacher's center -- to provide services to schools. In fact, most SEA officials seemed to take pride in the accomplishments of these organizations.

2. Enhancement

A state education agency unable because of local traditions and lack of resources or staff to take a direct, active role may be able to facilitate change at the local level through other organizations. We had several examples of this in the site reports of the maintenance SEAs. In Nebraska, for example, we saw the SEA-based state facilitator appointing "mini-linkers" in the regional educational service units, addressing at once the problems of dealing with over 1,000 school districts and of trying to work with districts skeptical of SEA-initiated activities. The Nebraska intermediate units, as we discussed in Chapter 3, have a well developed image as service-providers and are strategically closer to the school districts. Nebraska's SCBP project was using a similar concept in much the same way to facilitate services to the many small districts in that state.

In South Dakcta, which had no intermediate units at the time of our fieldwork, the NDN state facilitator had hit upon the strategy of designating exemplary or "lighthouse" school districts to be funded "mini-facilitators." Backed by the SEA, staff from these LEAs had begun to provide services to other local schools. After a year, this approach seemed to be working in a way that previous top-down methods had not, and scarce resources were being better allocated. South Dakota, as we have seen, seems to prefer peer exchange over other dissemination styles.

3. Categorical Dissemination and School Improvement

We should not neglect to mention the worthy efforts that were occurring in individual categorical programs in maintenance SEAs. Here the very active development, dissemination, and implementation effort going on in the Virginia SEA's vocational education department at the time of our fieldwork comes to mind. Coordination between vocational education and other programs in SEAs appeared to be non-existent in our site reports, and Virginia was no exception. Nevertheless, through its VETECS program, the Virginia SEA's vocational education department was directing development of curricula at the local level; exchange, review, and

dissemination of materials locally, regionally, and nationwide; and professional development of college faculty who would prepare vocational education teachers in districts to teach the new program. Clearly, vocational education is a topic that Virginians take seriously and the director of the SEA's vocational education department had little trouble interacting with locals. For a state that is ostensibly totally devoted to local control, the development of the VETECS program stands as a shining example of successful top-down dissemination and implementation; there seems to be participation at each level and no particular political fall-out attendant to it.

4. Strategic Coordination

In the maintenance SEAs, there were several examples of different programs joining forces to offer conferences, awareness sessions, etc. This occurred not only because SEA staff in small agencies such as these often occupied multiple roles but also because personnel made a conscious effort to spread scarce resources as far as possible. Such strategic coordination or "piggybacking" was not done as a matter of SEA policy but rather on an informal basis; yet it no doubt had the effect of making SEA services appear less scattered in the eyes of local districts. The main inhibitor of coordinated activities was the fear of co-mingling funds on the part of categorical program staff.

5. Strategic Retooling

This option is one whereby the SEA revises a mandate to put the responsibility more squarely in the hands of local districts while opening the possibility of assisting them in meeting that duty. In so doing, the SEA both respects local discretion and also works toward a change in its own image from "bad guy" regulator to more of an assistance orientation. An example from our sample is Maine's modification of its local professional development system. As the site report indicates, the Maine SEA created an alternative to the standard required procedure through which the state certifies teachers. Staff in an exempted district were encouraged to plan systemwide and to create new approaches to in-service, rather than the individual accumulation of college credit hours. The SEA provided help in working through the process and information on innovative professional development activities. The site researcher observed, "The basic idea is to delegate the power of accreditation to the district, and have the SEA facilitate the planning process."

Other SEAs, both maintenance and development, have used this idea of retooling a mandate already on the books to facilitate more meaningful action on the part of LEAs, assisted rather than monitored by SEAs. Such an approach does not involve adding requirements, which, as we have learned, is critical in states where local prerogatives are jealously guarded.

6. Direct Brokerage

Yet another role for maintenance SEAs is in the arranging of resources and services for local schools. For instance, while still not providing direct services to schools, the Maine SEA was moving toward playing the part of "broker," putting schools in touch with resources and services available from others. SEA staff were aware that this was a new role for the SEA and that they would have to meet the challenge of trying to facilitate assistance for local schools while simultaneously moving away from the dominant image of the SEA as purely a regulatory agency. However, SEA officials were already accustomed to "referring people to other people" so that the major task would be how to formalize and institutionalize a peer contact network based on informal, intimate knowledge.

7. State-Funded Dissemination and School Improvement

The overwhelming conclusion from our site reports of maintenance SEAs, as we have indicated, is that there would be no dissemination activity were it not for federal funds and regulations. The one small exception to this was the state-funded Pilot Studies Program in Virginia. Actually a research program, the effort encouraged exchange of ideas and results as well as development of new approaches in local school districts. As a one-woman operation, its impact was limited, but nonetheless out of proportion to the funds allocated to it. It appeared that a network of educators engaged in improvement efforts was being encouraged through this program.

The prospects for SEA-initiated school improvement activity in these states were minimal at the time of our fieldwork, but the intervening years have brought increased pressures for action from both local communities and legislatures increasingly concerned about school performance. While the four maintenance SEAs are unlikely to be transformed by these pressures -- due to lack of resources if nothing else -- they may well seek to expand their sphere of activity through some of the options we have described. Interesting times lie ahead.

CHAPTER 5:

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND THE ROLE OF DISSEMINATION IN DEVELOPMENT SEAs

I. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT SEAs

As we noted in the previous chapter, development states tend to adopt one of two different approaches to school improvement. One approach involves mandating goals or priorities for local districts while delegating authority to choose the means of achieving these objectives. We have labeled this an "objective-focused" approach. The other approach involves concentrating on the structures and processes for effecting school improvement while leaving local districts free to set the goals toward which they will direct their improvement efforts. We label this approach "process-focused."

Objective-focused development SEAs. The leadership of objective-focused development agencies concentrate on addressing particular substantive issues that have been dramatized politically. In Maryland, for example, the chief was brought in as part of the state board's effort to head off a minimum competency bill being promoted in the legislature by citizens' groups and several newspapers. His major policy initiative defined several areas in which students were required to reach some threshold of achievement, focused public and educators' attention on these areas, and called on local districts to define specific standards in each area.

Process-focused development SEAs. Since the middle to late sixties, when federal dollars began to flow to and through SEAs on a massive scale and SEAs began to attract increasing numbers of talented, energetic people of all levels, there has been a movement in some states to increase SEAs' service capabilities and to downplay basic fiscal and regulatory functions. The reform spirit that originally animated many federal programs also quickened at the state level. In some states, this has found expression in objective- or problem-focused initiatives such as the one discussed above. In others, however, it has combined with ideas from social change theory, organization development, and political science, resulting in initiatives that seek to promote school improvement by changing the ways in which schools address their problems. We call these SEAs process-focused organizations.

Process-oriented agencies may distribute their efforts in any of three ways. As in California, they may concentrate on building new structures and enhancing processes within local districts (e.g., offering school improvement grants to districts that establish school level councils to identify problems, set goals, and monitor the school's progress toward the goals). They may develop a network to provide problem-solving assistance to local districts, as in Illinois (e.g., a system of intermediate agencies that help districts and schools clarify their problems or goals,

find resources to address them, and carry out improvement programs). Or as in Pennsylvania, they may choose to view local capacities for problem-solving and external assistance as complementary elements of a unified school improvement program and attempt to do both. There is a certain logic and appealing comprehensiveness to the last of these, but the difficulty comes in finding the dollars, talent, and other resources necessary to carry out such a program.

A. School Improvement Strategies and Activities in Objective-Focused Development SEAs

The objective-focused development SEAs in our sample include Maryland, Michigan, and Arizona. Of the three, Maryland appeared at the time of our fieldwork to have the most organized, extensive, and coordinated school improvement effort and therefore will be discussed first and in somewhat more detail than Michigan or Arizona. Since development SEAs often tend to be involved in a variety of elaborate school improvement activities, too numerous to discuss within this volume, we will direct our attention more to characterizing the overall school improvement strategy than to describing each individual activity. Where possible, however, selected programs which illustrate the SEA strategy will be portrayed. Before turning to excerpts from our site reports, we want to say a word about the strategies of each state.

Although Maryland, Michigan, and Arizona are all included in the objective-focused category, they are clearly a diverse set nonetheless. Maryland, while focused on objectives for local districts -- the setting of standards in the competencies -- also developed a very sophisticated implementation plan for its school improvement program. (We will have more to say about implementation issues in Chapter 6.) In effect, the SEA simultaneously installed two innovations: the standards of Project Basic in the local districts and schools; and a well conceptualized delivery system in the SEA and between the SEA and the local schools. In fact, as the excerpt from the site report relates, the leadership of the SEA was having to decide whether the delivery system built to implement Project Basic in the schools was to become a permanent channel for service delivery. Components of that delivery system -- the facilitator corps, the professional development academy, and so on -- could be utilized to implement either objectives or a process in LEAs.

Michigan's initiatives were not coordinated in the same implementation plan, but rather were successive efforts aimed at different aspects of school improvement with the general goal of achieving equity. The Accountability Model -- one early effort that will be described in the Michigan excerpt -- seemed to be neither fish nor fowl, and was accompanied by little SEA assistance; not surprisingly, there appeared to be little impact either in the local schools or in the state department of education. A subsequent activity, the GESTALT program, was a process-focused initiative; it, too, appeared to be unsupported by an SEA implementation plan and consequently has had relatively little impact.

Following those efforts, Michigan moved to transform its major equity objective into a program format that also stressed objectives over process. At the time of our fieldwork, the High Needs Program was premised on local control and discretion with a focus on improvement in specific instructional areas. The identification of high needs districts for participation in the program represented an effort on the part of the SEA to target its resources and deliver services in a manner likely to have more impact. Reports from the field indicated that this program was taking hold.

In general, then, the Michigan SEA had developed what might be called a plurality of school improvement initiatives under the general goal of achieving equity in education but not tightly coordinated within either the SEA or the LEAs.

At the time of our fieldwork, Arizona's school improvement program was still in its formative stages. Its story is fascinating because the SEA appeared to be in transition from a maintenance to a development pattern of behavior. In fact, its Basic Skills Plan could be described as an example of both strategic retooling and strategic coordination, options we discussed in the last chapter. It represents strategic retooling in the sense that the SEA was moving to modify enforcement and add assistance components to help school districts meet already mandated federal and state requirements; the plan can be described as strategic coordination because the effort was being made to coordinate basic skills work at both the SEA and at the LEA levels without radical transformation of organization structure. The fact that a Basic Skills Unit had been created in the SEA, however, moves Arizona one step beyond strategic coordination and out of the maintenance category into the development column. Let us turn now to the excerpts from our site reports for these three states.

1. Maryland

In January, 1977 the Maryland State Board of Education adopted Superintendent Hornbeck's Mission of Schooling as its general educational philosophy and created the Office of Project Basic to implement it throughout the state by 1982. The Mission identifies five areas in which all students should show competence if they are to have an "effective adulthood" in society. They include: (a) basic skills (reading, writing, and calculation); (b) survival (interpersonal, mechanical, financial, consumer, and parenting skills); (c) world of work (preparing all students to find employment and/or enter post secondary schools); (d) world of leisure (the arts and physical education); and (e) world of citizenship (understanding and involvement in civic affairs and the electoral system).

The Mission also stresses that schools must provide life-related experiences to help students achieve those competencies.

The board insisted that the project bear the name of "Basic." Under the banner of "basics," this improvement policy speaks simultaneously to concerns that often conflict with one another. Its testing aspect responds to public demands for accountability, or proof that educators are achieving results with tax dollars. Its basic skills component, which was the first of the five areas to be implemented, satisfies the concern to "go back to the basics." However, its focus on demonstrated competencies and life-related experiences, especially in work, citizenship, and survival, suggests potentially far-reaching changes in the way schools teach children and relate to communities. Different groups have different ideas about what is "basic," and many can find some reflection of their concerns in Project Basic.

Project Basic began with a burst of energy. After the staff was hired and the plan developed, the major task was to determine the specific competencies that all Maryland students should have in each of the five areas before they graduate. First, five committees of educators drawn from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the counties, and Maryland's universities developed definitions and goals for the five areas. Then, five Competency Generation Committees, consisting of a mixture of education experts and representatives of key constituencies (such as principals, teachers, students) conducted an intensive weekend retreat to identify specific behaviors that demonstrate competency in the five areas. These committees produced 253 behaviors in 78 competency areas to be validated by the public.

Hornbeck and the Project Basic team believed that a large scale implementation process had to be legitimized by more than the laws and resolutions of the assembly and the state board. They designed a procedure for validating specific competencies by public consensus. Project Basic staff surveyed samples of relevant populations throughout the state. Then they sent questionnaires to these people asking them to rank the importance of the behaviors as prerequisites for high school graduation. College student volunteers manned phone banks to track down people who did not return the questionnaire. To secure the input of the Title I population, for example, door-to-door surveys were made in selected blocks of urban areas. If anyone heard of the poll and wanted to respond, their ratings were included in the tally. The feedback from this "referendum" allowed Project Basic Staff to compare responses across different population groups.

The validation process not only created a broad public awareness of Project Basic, but also armed the SEA with credibility to speak for the collective will of the people about the curricular goals for Maryland's schools. This credibility neutralized many sources of early opposition to competency-based teaching and testing.

As the MSDE's priority, the Office of Project Basic (OPB) occupies a unique position in the SEA. Its director has direct access to Hornbeck, and sits on the Curriculum Coordinating Council. Because Project Basic requires considerable collaboration among divisions, the council functions as the "primary reference group" for the project's relations with the rest of the agency.

To avoid requests for large amounts of additional funds to implement Project Basic, Hornbeck staffed and financed the project with people and money from other divisions. Each assistant superintendent had to nominate two of his best people for a personal interview for Project Basic. Hornbeck interviewed them personally, and in at least one case, asked for better candidates than those initially nominated. Besides avoiding the costs of new outside hiring to staff Project Basic, the staff transfers were also designed to knit the new project into existing divisions through people who had personal investments that spanned the boundaries. From the beginning, OPB stressed the significance of including local perspectives in planning and implementing the project. This ardent localism was at odds with more conventional attitudes in the department, and contributed to a psychological distance between OPB and the other divisions. The dominant tone on OPB was struck by the "on loaners" from the county offices. As the work grew more demanding and the esprit de corps grew, the "transferred staff" from within the SEA were pulled into the Project Basic maelstrom, and left their desks in their divisions mostly unused.

Instead of direct and informal exchange, most of the liaison between OPB and the divisions has to pass through formal, hierarchical channels. Cooperation from the divisions has come grudgingly. Some functions which used to be the exclusive domain of a division are now gradually moving over to Project Basic. Regular division staff are sometimes given short assignments to help Project Basic on tasks they feel might otherwise have been their own. They also tend to believe that the Project Basic staff is in closer contact with the superintendent and is somehow favored by working on the cameo project of the SEA.

The Office of Project Basic faces in two directions. One side faces the rest of the SEA, as was just discussed, while the other side faces the 24 counties. The OPB is a unique hybrid of state and local organizations. Half its original staff of ten were temporarily transferred from their divisions, which continued to pay their salaries, while the other half were "loaned" from the counties and paid by the state. OPB staffers had dual organizational identities, which helped to ensure that plans for implementation took many constituent groups and affected parties into careful consideration. Melding these perspectives to make the implementation process work was itself a formidable organizational accomplishment.

In 1977 Hornbeck asked each county superintendent to appoint someone reporting directly to him to act as the coordinator for Project Basic in that district. Twenty-one superintendents named their assistant superintendent for instruction, making the group virtually the same as the one that meets monthly at the MSDE. After two years of planning, most of which was done at the SEA, the first prepilot schools began to grapple with problems of implementation. It became apparent that a large amount of technical assistance, and a constant flow of communication between OPB and county offices would be needed to implement this complex and controversial program. Responding to the locals' lament of receiving new burdens without new resources, the MSDE gave each county $8,000 to handle the paperwork, and, more significantly, hired, trained, and deployed 24 full-time facilitators to work for three years exclusively on implementing Project Basic at the county and building levels, thus forming Project Basic's Facilitator Corps.

The facilitators' role is to assist with the implementation of Project Basic at the local level, and to provide linkage both among LEAs and between each LEA and the SEA. The emphasis was to be on service rather than monitoring. Facilitators are the primary liaison between Project Basic coordinators in the county offices and OPB in Baltimore. They are "joint appointees," reporting to the local coordinator and OPB's Director of Statewide Implementation. About half of the 24 facilitators were reassigned from MSDE jobs; the other half were employees of a local district. Some of these had worked in the districts in which they became facilitators, while others were transferred to another district. They are salaried by the SEA through the 1981-82 school year.

The facilitator role was designed in the fall of 1978 around the concept of "colleagues helping colleagues." The recent Rand studies on change agentry as well as other research on implementation were taken into account during the role design process through consultation with the R&D Exchange at Research for Better Schools in Philadelphia.

During the first year of implementation, facilitators divided their time between assisting the one or two pilot schools in the district, working in the county offices on curriculum and managerial matters, and orienting the staffs in the rest of the schools about the implementation activities that would begin the following year. In the county offices, they also assisted the Project Basic coordinator in carrying out the districtwide implementation plan for OPB, and coordinating the work of curriculum specialists in the skill areas related to the project.

Project Basic places heavy emphasis on planning. The initial planning process occurred in two phases. The new OPB staff produced a product-oriented comprehensive plan in early 1978. The rest of that year was devoted to producing a process-oriented implementation plan for the remainder of the five-year project. In late 1978, OPB published a thick volume called A Guide to Statewide Implementation to distribute to all county offices. Project Basic continues to be a plan-intensive operation. Each year OPB sends each county an implementation manual that outlines required activities and their timetables for the coming year. Each county formulates its own plan for the year, and sends it back to OPB for review. This state-to-county transaction is then reiterated between the county and the local schools. With the help of the facilitator, each county develops an implementation manual which outlines activities and timetables for implementing Basic in local schools. With the facilitator's help, the local implementation team formulates a plan for the year, and sends it back to the county office.

Project Basic is designed to learn from itself. During the prepilot year of 1978-1979, OPB staff worked in a series of schools to explore classroom implications of competency-based education, pilot evaluation instruments, and develop models for Community Learning Laboratories that would teach the "life-skills" outside regular classrooms. Project Basic as a whole was then formally piloted in 30 schools during 1979-80. The experience of these pilot implementation efforts was codified into manuals and other products for subsequent use in other implementing schools.

In the near future, MSDE policymakers will have to decide whether the Project Basic implementation system should be disbanded with the completion of its present task, or whether it should become institutionalized as a generalized delivery system for the st te to implement future policy initiatives through the 24 counties into local schools. Indeed, Hornbeck and other top MSDE officials are planning initiatives in youth employability and extended elementary education for the near future. It is likely that there will be more improvement policies that could be implemented through such a system.

The emergence of a skilled corps of professional facilitators to implement school improvement initiatives from the state poses an ironic dilemma to David Hornbeck. A visceral and persistent activist, he is wary that "the bureaucracy can scuttle anything you try to accomplish." He has invested heavily in creating an implementation system that can both use and bypass many line structures in the agency. That system has successfully introduced a complex and controversial set of changes throughout the state. As the completion of its mission appears on the horizon, the question arises whether it can and should become a generalized implementation system that is ready and well-suited to carry out other school improvement policies, or whether the pressures to do so arise from the age-old instincts of the bureaucracy to institutionalize procedures and arrangements without the primary consideration being the accomplishment of a substantive goal.

In the fall of 1977, the new Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) designed the Maryland Professional Development Academy on the model of the Principal's Academy which Hornbeck had worked on in Pennsylvania. Launched in part as a means for implementing Mission of Schooling at the school building level, the primary goal of the academy is to provide staff development programs for principals to strengthen their skills as the instructional leaders of local schools. Hornbeck believes that the building principal plays the most important role in the whole administrative structure when it comes to implementing new or improving current instructional programs. Furthermore, most principals have become overburdened by the operational side of running schools, while their role as local instructional leaders has been weakened.

Recent research conducted by the SEA had also showed (1) that almost 70% of Maryland's teachers have completed certification requirements, suggesting that principals will need to take initiatives "to help the school staff continue to develop and maintain instructional skills;"

(2) that differences in student achievement are related to the way principals organize their schools, use their time, relate to teachers, and choose curriculum; and (3) that "perceived failures (in curricular innovation) were generally due, not to the flaws in the innovations themselves, but rather to inadequate patterns of implementation. . . The principal plays a critical role in initiating and managing change at the school level." (General Operating Plan for the Maryland Professional Development Academy, January, 1978, p. 3).

The academy was initially formed by a forced pooling of in-service money throughout the department. Its annual budget of about $200,000 is pieced together each year from bits of many different state and federal funding sources.

The academy runs four to six one-week training institutes each summer for principals and other school-based administrators. The institutes bring from 25 to 30 principals together in a retreat-like setting for intensive training around an issue related to their role as instructional leaders. Participants must attend a one-day planning conference in the spring prior to the institute, and two two-day meetings during the subsequent school year to reinforce what they had learned in the summer. Prior statewide assessments of principals' needs determine the topics of the institutes.

The academy has three means of reinforcing and refining implementation: the technical assistance and follow-up sessions mentioned above; occasional visits by principals to other schools that have successfully developed staff development programs; and a local in-service grants program for $3,000-$5,000 to defray the cost of a staff development project related to the institutes. Awards are made for planning, and pilot and demonstration projects growing out of academy-sponsored efforts.

Project Basic has recently decided that the professional development academy is a useful way of delivering technical assistance to school-based administrators on instructional issues raised by the competency-based improvement program. OPB wants to change the impression among many local educators that Project Basic is only a testing program concerned with setting minimum performance standards for graduation. The sensitivities to testing, and the failure of an early test on technical grounds after it was administered, eroded credibility and drew excessive attention to the assessment component of the project.

Working through the professional development academy, which has a strong instructional improvement orientation, OPB has arranged four special institutes for 1981 under the aegis of SITIP, School Improvement Through Instructional Programs. The format is similar to the regular institutes, including awareness sessions, intensive training for a summer's week, and two follow-up conferences in the subsequent school year. Districts may participate only by sending a team consisting of a school board member, a person from the district staff, a principal and two teachers, who together will be responsible for applying the training to curricular improvement efforts generally related to Project Basic. A special small grants fund for SITIP participants will be available in the fall of 1981. The Office of Developmental Projects will administer the SITIP institutes and conferences, and Research for Better Schools will evaluate its impact through a cost-sharing arrangement with MSDE.

2. Michigan

The school improvement activities of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) have responded to the political, social, and economic conditions of the times. In the 1960s the agency was one of the first in the country to align itself with the social reform movement devoted to providing equal educational opportunity for all social classes. Supported by plentiful federal resources, Superintendent of Public Instruction John Porter instigated a major departmental thrust toward attaining "equality, equity, and excellence" for all Michigan students. As the 1970s brought increasing public demand for accountability, the MDE again led the nation in instituting statewide assessment programs. Porter implemented many additional policies, including the Accountability Model, which involved the SEA in identifying problems and solutions in local school programs. In addition to promoting collaborative problem solving, the MDE developed several forms of dissemination as strategies for supporting local improvement. Disseminating information and exemplary practices has been a central component of agency policy since the mid-sixties.

With the advent of the 1980s, the milieu in which the MDE operates has shifted dramatically, again forcing the SEA to redefine its role. A severe fiscal crisis in Michigan threatens to disrupt many current patterns. Faced with an impending 50% budget cut, the MDE, now under the leadership of a new state superintendent, must reassess its relationships to local schools. Without the financial resources, the clear programmatic mandates, and the missionary zeal of the 1960s and 1970s, the agency

can no longer proceed as it has in the past. MDE officials claim that the current crisis is as much an opportunity as a problem. They believe the demands for reorganization and policy clarification will ultimately promote tighter agency coordination and, possibly, even stronger school improvement programs. Facing these mounting restrictions while standing in a strong tradition of activism, the new leadership must revamp and streamline the agency in creative ways if it is to sustain the MDE's proactive role in fostering improvement efforts in local schools.

Since the mid-1960s, the MDE has actively promoted local school improvement. In addition to the categorical program efforts in vocational education, special education, Title I, etc., the SEA has sponsored three major improvement initiatives: the Accountability Model, GESTALT, and the High Needs Program. Diffusing exemplary programs and disseminating general program information have been central MDE strategies for local change. Major programmatic efforts toward these ends include the Michigan Adoption Program (MAP) and the Michigan Education Resources Information Center (MERIC), the State Dissemination Capacity Building Project, both of which will be described in our discussion of the MDE's dissemination strategies and activities.

When LEAs throughout the state were forced to evaluate student performance through the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), the MDE assisted local schools to improve programs and raise test scores. Porter's introduction of the Accountability Model attempted to systematize the improvement process by prescribing a strategy for LEA/MDE collaboration. The model was introduced with mixed response and limited success. According to an official, the central cause of the program's minimal impact, despite massive publicity and SEA-wide involvement, was that it provided few concrete solutions for the LEAs' immediate problems. While it helped push locals toward systematic program improvement, direct assistance or follow-up was seldom provided to teachers and administrators.

GESTALT, Getting Educators Started Thinking About Learning Theory, is an offshoot of the Accountability Model. Through this program the MDE provides minimal funding to 12 LEAs to implement a comprehensive improvement program. Like its predecessor, GESTALT is based on the application of a sequential process defined by the MDE to involve locals in a collaborative effort to refine their education program. However, given fiscal limitations and a restrained public response, the program appears to be a noble experiment without much of a future. LEAs have often been frustrated with the low ownership they sense in the program. Some observers

believe the MDE structures the program too much, leaving insufficient room for LEAs to develop their own strategies for change.

Many MDE officials themselves believe the GESTALT program has major inherent problems. One staffer commented, "The mission is correct, but the sermon is wrong." She drew the analogy of a doctor (the MDE) who prescribes drugs (GESTALT) for a patient (LEA) who doesn't know he is ill. Another official said that the budget allocated for the program is too small to stimulate large scale organizational renewal in a school system. He also noted that GESTALT is probably more useful as a staff development vehicle for MDE linking agents than as an instrument for local educational change.

The High Needs Program was developed in direct response to the MEAP test results. Through this program, the MDE has isolated for intensive assistance the school districts which reported the lowest scores on the statewide test in reading and mathematics. Through consortia of universities, intermediate school districts, LEAs, and MDE consultants, the SEA attempts to secure a wide range of services from several local sources for "high needs" schools. Unlike the Accountability Model and GESTALT, the High Needs program appears to be extremely successful. Among the primary reasons for its success cited by MDE observers are: (a) locals are given the flexibility to develop their own means of solving their problems; (b) a wide variety of human, financial, and information resources have been committed to the program; and (c) the focus of MDE assistance has been on specific instructional areas, such as mathematics and reading.

Because of its readily observable success and extensive popular support, it is likely that the High Needs Program will remain a central component of the MDE's school improvement efforts.

3. Arizona

The Arizona State Board of Education and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) have attempted to demonstrate a belief in two themes for education: local autonomy and an emphasis on basic skills education. According to the Basic Skills Plan 1980, these themes have been displayed by the state board and the SEA in their rules and regulations, their stance toward the local districts, and the nature of the Plan.

Although there are requirements in the Basic Skills Plan for districts to teach basic skills subjects, to develop plans for evaluating students in the basic skills, and to set promotion levels in basic skill subjects for graduation, it is believed that local control is maintained because plans for meeting these requirements are developed and implemented at the local level.

Arizona has a long history of involvement with basic skills. Beginning in 1969, the Arizona Legislature mandated a statewide grade 3 reading achievement test and later mandated a similar test for mathematics skills at grade 5. However, it wasn't until 1972 that the legislature took a major step in promoting a comprehensive basic skills assessment plan called CUES -- Continuous Uniform Evaluation System. The legislature directed the state board of education to do the following:

> By June 30, 1975, in cooperation with all local school districts, develop, establish, and direct the implementation of a continuous uniform evaluation system of pupil achievement in relation to measurable performance objectives in basic subjects . . . Basic subjects shall be defined for these purposes as reading, writing, and computation skills (AFS 15-102.26).

State board policy has determined that a district must implement five phases of CUES to achieve total compliance: (1) create goals and performance objectives for each grade level in each basic skill area; (2) create criterion referenced tests to determine student competency in each performance objective; (3) develop alternative learning systems for each performance objective; (4) develop a record keeping system that will track each child's progress; and (5) develop a parent reporting system that will communicate the students' progress to their parents.

Other initiatives promoting basic skills acquisition and assessment were advanced by the state board of education. The board adopted a requirement that all local districts must require every student graduating from the 8th grade to attain a 6th grade competency in reading, writing and computational skills. Graduation from 12th grade would require a student to demonstrate at least 9th grade competency in the area of reading.

Although these requirements are pending on all Arizona school districts, it is the districts themselves which have determined the specific performance objectives,

required competency levels, and assessment procedures. This was in keeping with the state's emphasis on local control of education.

In 1975, Superintendent Carolyn Warner began a long range plan for completing a comprehensive integrated state board plan of action for Arizona public schools. As part of that effort, she created a statewide advisory committee composed of teachers, school administrators, representatives from school boards, business, industry, labor, and parents to identify, prioritize, and report on Arizona's educational needs. This committee identified basic skills as the top priority need of Arizona schools in the area of curriculum and instruction.

In 1978, Mrs. Warner appointed a second statewide advisory committee to identify and report on student competencies. Over 250 concerned citizens from all 14 Arizona counties participated in these deliberations, and 103 "necessary" competencies were chosen for emphasis. The competencies collected from this "Phase II" needs assessment effort were listed in 10 major emphasis areas and ranked in terms of importance. Two of the top ranked competency areas were communication and computation, or the basic skills.

As a result of these needs assessment findings, in 1979 the state superintendent's cabinet adopted as one of three primary thrusts, "Basic Skills Improvement Services." Simultaneously, a departmental reorganization resulted in the creation of a Basic Skills Unit to provide leadership for this thrust within the SEA and within the state.

The Arizona Basic Skills Plan was conceived by the ADE as an effort to integrate all state board, legislative, and department of education efforts with federal program requirements in the basic skills areas. The Basic Skills Plan centers on competencies and skills in three academic areas: communication, computation, and citizenship. This integrated effort will result in the specific coordination of education program services within the department of education, and in leadership to local school districts for accomplishing coordination of basic skill instruction and assessment.

Under the leadership of the Basic Skills Unit, education program services in the ADE will be coordinated and leadership will be provided to local school districts for accomplishing coordination of basic skills instruction and assessment. The Basic Skills Unit will be responsible for developing a product and process model for basic skills, as well as strategies to promote parent involvement and investment in the basic skills effort.

The product model contains specific competencies for elementary, junior high school, middle high school, and senior high school skills, examples of assessment instruments, corrective instruction packets, recordkeeping and reporting systems, promotion and retention policy guidelines, other 3R's programs (model citizenship programs to promote Rights, Respect and Responsibilities), early childhood developmental competencies programs, and parent/family involvement programs. The materials for this model have been developed in three languages: English, Spanish, and Navajo. As reported by the director of the Basic Skills Unit, "the product model has now been basically completed by the department."

The development of the process model, however, is presenting the unit with some difficulties. As proposed, the process model will include suggested procedures for developing local component products. Essentially the process model as developed by departmental staff will include a documentation of their activities to coordinate basic skills at the state level. SEA officials hope that the state department efforts at coordination will be replicable at the local level. It is anticipated that school districts will accept or adapt the product model or utilize the process model to develop or revise their own basic skills plan.

What is central to the conception of the basic skills effort as conceived in Arizona is an understanding that it is primarily a management strategy designed to coordinate already mandated activities such as CUES and competency testing in math and reading. The product and process components are, simply stated, just means to encourage districts to more efficiently comply with these existing mandates.

In order to enact any new major programmatic effort, the state superintendent must rely on other than regulatory means for promoting change within the SEA because all but four positions are covered under state personnel commission rules. Carolyn Warner, the current superintendent, has encouraged school improvement by focusing her efforts on providing for the coordination of existing departmental activities rather than creating radically different ones. Using the Basic Skills Plan as the vehicle for that coordination effort, she has minimized disruption within the ADE by ensuring that ongoing departmental activities are maintained.

Although the SEA's Basic Skills Unit was created in January, 1979, and has been actively involved since then in developing strategies to implement Arizona's Basic Skills Plan, the effort is still very much in an

embryonic stage. Basic skills products have been developed by the unit for dissemination to local districts, media campaigns to inform the general public have been planned, and strategies to promote the effort and ensure its adoption have been prepared.

Nonetheless, the plan has not yet been implemented by local districts. Initial local district involvement is scheduled for September, 1980. Consequently, we can only speculate on how local districts will fare in adopting the basic skills effort and ADE-developed basic skills products.

Until 1980, the basic skills effort received no additional funding from the state legislature to promote additional activities. Now, with a legislative appropriation of $400,000 for SEA use, the department will be able to further develop its resources to promote the adoption of a basic skills focus throughout the school districts of the state. Although the ADE now has its own basic skills funding, the monies available to individual LEAs through federally funded Title II awards are still rather minimal and do not generally exceed $5,000 per district.

Despite the low level of funding, it is the contention of the director of the Basic Skills Unit and other SEA staff that local districts will embrace the Basic Skills Plan. According to this official, districts already had mandates in basic skills which they had to address. "We've provided them a coordinated system to work with all these mandates and they have to work with all these mandates anyway."

B. School Improvement Strategies and Activites in Process-Focused SEAs

Three SEAs in our sample can be characterized as process-focused SEAs. These include California, Illinois, and Pennsylvania. At the time of our fieldwork, these three had all developed processes for use by schools as part of school improvement efforts. Unlike Maryland, Michigan, and Arizona, these SEAs did not specify the areas in which the processes were to be applied. California's School Improvement Program was mandated by the state legislature. Also mandated for schools, the Pennsylvania initiative -- potentially the most comprehensive of all the SEA efforts we examined -- was still unfolding at the time we visited the state. Moreover, although the components of the program were in evidence, plans for implementation and mechanisms for getting the program into the local schools were still evolving. Use of the Problems Index in Illinois, on the other hand, was voluntary except for schools applying for Title IV-C grants.

Illinois regional Program Services Teams were also available for assistance to schools on a voluntary basis.

Representative school improvement strategies and, when appropriate, illustrative activities of each of these SEAs are described below, excerpted from the site reports.

1. California

In California, school improvement is viewed as a generic notion toward which the California State Department of Education (CSDE) directs its primary effort. School improvement is not conceived in terms of programs. Rather, it is a way of thinking about education and students. Underlying this notion of school improvement are several key assumptions about how best to promote school reform. These include: (1) the needs of both students and schools are to be treated individually; emphasis is to be placed on the capacity of each individual school to determine the form school improvement should take at that school; (2) the person or groups most affected by decisions about schooling should have an opportunity to participate in making those decisions because they are believed to be competent decision makers; (3) mechanisms to promote and ensure the involvement of various groups in a kind of "participatory democracy" for educational planning must be legitimized and set in place; and (4) schools should be thought of as "holistic" institutions in that various components of the school's program should be integrated with one another.

This stance of the California State Department of Education may be attributed to Wilson Riles, elected the Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1968, and to the fact that he has a core of key CSDE staff who share a proactive philosophy based on these general assumptions. Indeed, most striking at the state level is the consistency of the views expressed by key CSDE officials about the educational ideology which has shaped SEA initiatives around school improvement, their perceptions of learnings from past reform efforts, and their view of problems or dilemmas associated with improvement efforts initiated at the state level.

The California School Improvement Program (CSIP) became part of California education in September of 1977 when the legislature passed, and the governor signed, Assembly Bill 65 (now State Education Code, Part 28, Chapter 6, Section 5200-52039). The program was a response to a belief held by many ordinary citizens and educators alike that public education in the state needed to be strengthened.

Concerns with such issues as accountability, competency testing, special education, and bilingual education were accompanied by a view that schools needed a renewal process -- a regularized means for members of the school community to keep informed of current developments in educational practice and to respond to the diverse needs of a changing student body.

California had begun to address concerns such as these through a forerunner of the school improvement program, the Early Childhood Education Program (ECE). Building on features of ECE, a Riles' appointed task force, the RISE Commission, developed a proposal to extend the ECE program through Grade 12. The governor vetoed the proposal, however, and decided to develop his own bill, essentially to include exactly what the RISE Commission had already proposed.

At the same time, the Serrano case brought about the need for a massive school finance reform package. The governor's school improvement proposal became a part of this package, officially titled Assembly Bill 65 -- a move which some respondents concluded was essential to ensure CSIP's survival. It was felt that the school improvement program would not have been approved by the legislature on its own merits.

What is interesting yet paradoxical about the program is its explicit mix of externally conceived requirements with its guiding principal that authority and responsibility for achieving improvement lie in the hands of the local school community. Enacted by the legislature and managed by the CSDE, the CSIP by statute and guidelines is externally created and initiated -- yet, what is mandated by the program is local control of goals and school activities to improve education at particular school sites.

A careful reading of the legislation and the CSDE guidelines for the program, however, indicates that the planners' intention was to develop an amalgam reform program which would be "jointly owned" by the CSDE, district officials, school administrators, teachers, and local communities.

While each school community is given central responsibility for developing and writing the individual improvement plan, the school districts and the states also are required to assist in the process. Assembly Bill 65 directs school districts to provide their school improvement schools with program information and to offer them assistance in a variety of other ways. The state department of education, too, is responsible for assisting schools in carrying out their responsibilities by making technical assistance and relevant information available.

School districts and the state play another major role in the school improvement program as well. Each school is required to establish a school site council. Once the school site council has developed, written, and voted to approve its three-year plan for improvement, it must submit that plan to its district governing board for review. That board is responsible for approving the plan or rejecting it with specific suggestions for modification. When approved at the district level, the plans are forwarded to the state board of education along with district "master plans" for phasing in school improvement in designated schools, and for providing the mandated technical assistance and carrying out other mandated district functions. The state board has the authority to "review and approve or disapprove, in whole or in parts, district master plans."

However, the legislation also specifies that "the [state] superintendent shall recognize diversity in school improvement objectives and implementation strategies. In no case shall the review process be used to impose or prohibit a particular instructional program."

In actual practice, the CSDE performs a diverse range of monitoring and support services. Field agent teams promote the program, assisting schools to establish school site councils and to develop initial planning grants. An impressive array of informational materials has been prepared and disseminated by the CSDE toward these ends. The state is formally involved in two interventions -- a compliance review and a program review -- within all CSIP projects. As specified in the enabling legislation, review teams are composed of both local practitioners and CSDE officials (the locals must constitute the majority). Schools participating in adhoc consortia often exchange reviewers with each other. Intensive training sessions for reviewers (both local and CSDE) are conducted regularly throughout the state, and 1500 such reviewers are trained each year.

Compliance reviews are conducted on all incoming school improvement proposals. Eighty percent of submitted plans include some error and are sent back down to the district level for revision. Program reviews are performed at least once in the three-year life span of every CSIP project. Assembly Bill 65 specifies that those with the greatest implementation problems are to be reviewed yearly. The review consists of an intensive three-day assessment of project progress toward fulfillment of its objectives. Assessment criteria are based on 12 value judgements of project quality as measured through various forms of student interactions. The state provides extensive technical assistance in program development to projects which are unfavorably reviewed.

Expectations about how the CSIP will work also include the idea of consolidation of effort. Consequently, another of the specifications of Assembly Bill 65 is a directive to the state superintendent to minimize bureaucratic obstacles to the program. Administrators of the CSIP were encouraged to mesh CSIP-related paperwork with that of other CSDE programs. The SEA's response has been to develop a "consolidated application" for all categorical programs in the state. This procedure is consistent with the spirit of the CSIP legislation in that it encourages local schools to assume a holistic approach to program planning. The assumption is made that effective planning should include all aspects of a school's curriculum. By requiring a single application (and a single planning process), the CSIP program will be integrated with, for example, Title I, Bilingual, and Migrant Education programs. In addition, the lessening of bureaucratic paperwork for local districts enhanced their acceptance of the program.

Our data indicate that the tenets of the school improvement program have been institutionalized and accepted by various educational constituencies in California, and that the program has changed the nature of public education in the state. The notion of "joint ownership," despite the difficulties it imposes, has been influential in gaining this acceptance for the program. More specifically, the CSDE has fostered "joint ownership" because (1) the CSIP guidelines create resource, influence, and financial incentives for local schools and communities to participate in the program; (2) the CSDE has been highly responsive to the problems of local districts in administering and implementing the program, and they have, in fact, continually reshaped the guidelines to reduce these difficulties; and (3) key departmental officials share a deep ideological commitment to the program, and seem to have strong personal investments in its success. Consequently, they have been able to instill some of this commitment in others as well as having indicated their willingness to do what is necessary to see that, at minimum, the tenets of the program become rooted in California's educational structure.

A CSDE survey on the impact of CSIP on 178 schools, indicated that:

- There is agreement that school plans reflect at least moderate change from usual practice and deal with the major local educational problems.
- Principals and members of school site councils are viewed as very supportive of the school improvement program; other teachers are also viewed as supportive.

- Participants' sense of efficacy is high.
- Participants are generally satisfied with the operation and effectiveness of their local School Improvement Program.
- Participants expect the program to exert at least moderate influence on student achievement and attitudes.

2. Illinois

The Illinois Problems Index (IPI) illustrates the approach taken to school improvement by the Illinois Office of Education (IOE). The IPI is an instrument developed by IOE for their local school districts to plan and set priorities. It is a needs assessment instrument that moves from generic problem diagnosis to specific goal setting in an explicit seven-stage process. Three additional characteristics distinguish IPI as a needs assessment instrument: (a) it provides a pre-determined list of 50 school-related problems; (b) it features a consensus approach to school problem solving, involving both professional school personnel and lay community representatives; and (c) it requires that priorities be validated by checking evidence and available resources.

Among IOE officials, the IPI is considered the model for planning processes in local school development and improvement efforts. Although all LEAs are encouraged to use the IPI, it is not mandated, except for Title IV-C applications to the Illinois Centers for Educational Improvement (ICEIs).

The IOE originally devised the IPI to function within the resource-linkage system of the Illinois Resource and Dissemination Network and Program Services Teams (PSTs). One of the problems faced by the PSTs in delivering local services was that, although school districts had a general idea of what they wanted or needed, they had to become more specific and concrete if the service teams were to be helpful. One official described the problem this way:

> In the early development of this concept, the IOE found that it was very difficult to provide resources when the local district was not sure what resources would serve its needs. There was a good reason for this. Although many districts had a "feel" for the problems and concerns that were felt in their community, many did not attempt to define and refine these problems. Thus, a district would not "feel" compelled to take developmental action in many areas.

This official suggested that unless LEAs defined their needs, they could not act. He supported his claim with reference to literature on resource utilization and linkage which states that needs assessments are possibly "the most critical step in the linking process" (Havelock, 1973). Planning is also the key quality control measure operating within the Illinois dissemination network. It is a front-end mechanism used in program development rather than a back-end validating mechanism that assesses outcomes. The IPI provided the IOE at once with a rational, and therefore defensible, basis for allocating limited resources to high-priority problems, while supplying LEAs with a method to document their needs and problems in applying for federal or state grants-in-aid.

With its emphasis on planning, in effect the IOE is diffusing its own managerial culture to the administration of local school districts. By requiring widely participatory and consensual mechanisms within the framework of data-based decision-making, the IPI inculcates local school levels with the managerial skills championed by the new IOE. The reformers in Springfield believe the IPI imparts the leadership skills necessary for the success of school improvement efforts.

The Problem Index is a tool for reviewing program and operational areas of administration in the school district in order to bring divergent perspectives into some kind of focus and to establish priorities based on that. It is also used to encourage validation and evaluation in general and to raise the level of sophistication of management of school districts for the general welfare of that district.

The IPI is actively disseminated through the PSTs (which will be described in our discussion of Illinois' dissemination strategies and activities). At this point, however, only about 6% of Illinois school districts use the process. The same IOE official explained that the reason the IOE has not taken a strong marketing approach is because of its implications in terms of local accountability.

> You're talking about a very threatening process and a very threatening topic itself. Whenever you talk about assessment or evaluation in the educational world, you are talking threat, because you're talking about effectiveness and accountability. Whenever you're talking about accountability, somebody's responsible. Talk about responsibility, you're talking about money, salary, longevity, a whole bunch of different things. All of those things are woven

> together, and are threatening. . . . So, what we wanted to do was push the idea of planning, not raise the awareness of threat, associated threats, and accountabilities. The low profile was, I think, the desirable way to go.

The threat of accountability is further aggravated by the encouragement to involve lay persons in the planning process. From his experience of several years developing IPI, this official stated that:

> The most critical variable in my experience is the threat to involve community in professional development of schools. School districts, teachers, and administrators, are not yet convinced that parents can make a professional contribution to the academic world.

Urban school districts, with access to local expertise and resources, tend not to see IPI as a useful innovation. In discussing Chicago, for example, he explained:

> . . . we do have Chicago suburban districts, but we have no Chicago district. . . . Chicago considers itself to be a state within a state; very reluctant to accept the work of others in any area. They do have a large administration, they have a research staff, they have everything. They are content to develop their own mechanisms for managing their school districts. So leadership initiative by the state agency is perceived as not all that great up there.

It appears that those who have adopted the IPI as an innovation in the planning process have done so because of its compatibility with the managerial style and values they have already. General facility with modern technology often associated with urban centers has also been suggested as a factor affecting the ability and willingness to use the IPI.

The IPI is an innovation in basic administrative process. It inculcates rational planning and control over organizational variables that typifies many contemporary innovations for school improvement. Like other such models disseminated in Illinois, its pattern of spread suggests a positive correlation between acceptance of the outside innovation and the level of sophistication and managerial competence already at work in the adopter setting.

3. Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania considers its school improvement program to be "a partnership among the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), school districts, individual schools and other educational agencies supportive of the Pennsylvania education system" (Site Working Paper, October 17, 1979). As now conceived, school improvement is a process that includes: (1) analyzing current programs, services, and capabilities of schools; (2) developing action strategies and plans at both district and building levels; (3) implementing these plans; and (4) evaluating these efforts using self-study and third-party techniques.

The PDE includes as the goals of the school improvement program the best education possible; the best trained professionals; the best use of educational resources; increased confidence in public education; effective communication between partners; and voluntary registration by local buildings in the "every school a good school" program.

Development of the school improvement program proceeded in stages: Shape I, Shape 2, and Shape 3. Shape 1 was presented on November 16, 1979. Incorporating the concerns of teachers and administrators, Shape 2 appeared in draft form three months later. Prepared in May 1980, Shape 3 reflected public reaction to Shape 2 and constitutes the final plan.

The program builds upon existing educational organizations rather than establishing new ones. It concentrates on enhancing the planning and problem-solving capacities of local schools. Of particular importance to the program are the Long Range Planning for School Improvement (LRPSI) and the Educational Quality Assessment (EQA), both of which are described later in this section. The planning process is the heart of the program, and EQA informs it by establishing priorities for local districts.

Participating schools register in the school improvement program. To register, a school must work with its community to determine its strengths and weaknesses, and then prepare a first school improvement plan. A school is registered after it has completed a one-year plan, evaluates their efforts using the EQA, and revises the plan for the second year.

There are serious obstacles which can jeopardize the successful implementation of the program. These include (a) lack of an organizational structure that can reach to the local level to ensure its use; (b) lack of an implementation emphasis; (c) low morale and high tensions in the PDE; and (d) lack of money. Despite the lack of

hard funding, however, the school improvement program began in September 1980. School personnel from 100 districts and 600 school buildings participated in a staff development program to prepare them for the school improvement activities to come. The PDE projects that all districts and buildings will be involved in the school improvement program by 1984. New models of teacher preservice education, instruction, and inservice education will be introduced in September 1981 to provide better trained professional staff for schools.

From the PDE's perspective, the program provides a basis to organize all its regulatory and service functions. The PDE is responsible for developing and implementing the school improvement program and for providing leadership and training to the local school leaders engaged in the school improvement mission. The PDE has established a network of information service units, training conferences, inservice structures, and technical assistance agencies to support school improvement at the district, school, and classroom levels. The network involves four basic partners: the PDE, intermediate units, institutions of higher education, and other LEAs. Each partner is responsible for synchronizing the resource system to the needs of a client district. The school districts will identify their technical assistance needs and initiate the intervention of outside agencies. PDE field representatives will be the primary contact between the SEA and the school districts. There are now 50 PDE employees with half-time school improvement assignments to work as field representatives. They will be part of a school improvement team which also includes an intermediate unit school improvement advisor and/or a representative from a local institution of higher education.

The PDE field representative has the lead in making sure that an LEA receives its technical assistance. The field representative will either provide the assistance directly, or broker assistance with other PDE staff, intermediate units, or institutions of higher education. The PDE has placed great stock in the viability of inter-organizational coordination of service delivery. It plans to coordinate the delivery of services by intermediate units and institutions of higher education to local districts via school improvement teams. In addition, the PDE will provide informational and programmatic resources through its newly established PDE Resource Center.

As conceptualized, Pennsylvania's School Improvement Program is a comprehensive approach to educational reform. Tying together an emphasis on research and development with a concern for building local problem-solving capacity, the program focuses on planning as a way to make schools "ready" for change. Its follow-up focus is to disseminate the results of R&D and exemplary practice to these schools once they have determined what they need.

The predecessor to the Pennsylvania School Improvement Program was a pilot Research, Development, and Utilization Project (RDU) conceived and funded by NIE in 1976. The project provided technical assistance to school districts interested in curriculum improvement. It included both a school improvement model and a curriculum improvement process. The school improvement model consisted of a linker, housed in an intermediate unit, leading a Local Action Team of local school leaders through a problem-solving approach to curriculum improvement. Additional support was provided by a School Assistance Team. The notion of the intermediate unit as linker between local needs and outside resources was an important precedent for the PSIP.

The RDU model provided a structure through its curriculum improvement process to deliver technical assistance to individual schools. The linker used a general problem-solving process to lead a school from identifying a problem to installing an R&D solution in the curriculum.

Although funding for the RDU expired in 1980, it was a "pilot test" for the PDE's conception of school improvement. The RDU combined the themes of building local problem-solving capacity, linkage through intermediate units, and utilizing R&D products. Scanlon's Improvement Program was based on the RDU, but apparently without acknowledgement.

Another recent PDE reform effort also provided some important precedents for Scanlon's School Improvement Program. In January 1976, the state board directed then Secretary Pittinger to initiate a five-year, field-based study to determine (1) the skills and competencies needed by young people to function successfully as adults; (2) how school programs could be modified to teach those competencies; and (3) how curricular regulations and graduation requirements should be changed to reinforce these outcomes as educational goals for schools. The five year pilot project was called Project 81.

In February 1977, 12 model districts were selected to participate in the project. Each model district has a project coordinator who works with the Project 81 staff in the PDE. The three primary goals for the project are that -- by 1981 -- each model district will have: (1) identified the competencies, skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are necessary for young people to function successfully as adults; (2) revised its curriculum and graduation requirements in light of those competencies; and (3) developed a management plan that uses community, professional, and financial resources. Procedures and products were being developed and field tested locally. Recommendations for state level directions and requirements were to emanate from the model sites.

Although this program is still in operation, it appears to have dropped from favor after Pittinger and his deputy, David Hornbeck, left the PDE. The program was not being supported beyond the pilot sites, and no competency testing program appears likely to grow out of it. The PDE simply may not have the political clout to mandate statewide programs. The failure of Project 81 to carry out systemwide change on a statewide scale may have lowered expectations in the Scanlon administration of the role the PDE can hope to play in fostering local improvement efforts. By creating a program that broadly encourages school improvement -- with which few can disagree -- but avoids stipulating specific arrangements with which many local school people would take issue, Scanlon's people may be trying to launch a program that is within the political means of the PDE.

Mentioned previously as integral to the school improvement program, Educational Quality Assessment (EQA) operates under 1963 legislation (Act 299) that requires the state board to develop "an evaluation procedure designed to measure objectively the adequacy and efficiency of the educational programs offered by the public schools of the Commonwealth." EQA was introduced in 300 of the 505 school districts from 1970 to 1973 on a voluntary basis. In November 1973, the state board established a timetable to assess all schools in the Commonwealth during the school years 1973-1974, 1974-1975, and 1975-1976. All but 50 districts are now using EQA assessment.

EQA programs give each school information that compares the performance of their students with those of other schools with similar student populations and resources. The EQA contains questions related to each of the goals of quality education adopted by the state board in 1965. The test focuses particularly on communication skills and math.

EQA is now institutionalized at the local level. However, one EQA official predicts problems with using EQA as a basis for school improvement. He noted that two of the 50 non-user districts are Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and cited EQA's prior experience with suits for civil rights violation, and other legal precedings which arose in opposition to a mandated statewide assessment program.

Additional concerns for EQA as part of school improvement are limited funding and increasing workloads. Although some promises have been made, this EQA official does not expect either additional funding or additional staff anytime soon. Nevertheless, he concluded that school improvement should not change the program. "EQA will remain in the business of identifying what schools' problems are, and that's central to the school improvement mission." Indeed, the Pennsylvania School Improvement Program builds directly on EQA by encouraging the use of its results as a basis for identifying needs.

Another integral part of the program, Long Range Planning (LRP), is a state mandate which requires school districts every five years to assess their programs, identify priorities for improvement, and develop plans for making improvements. The LRP requirement is not new in Pennsylvania. In 1967, the state board of education mandated that all districts develop an LRP for school building construction. In 1974, these regulations were expanded to focus on educational programs and services, and to require community and staff involvement. LRP guidelines were revised again in 1980 to coincide with the SEA's new goals for school improvement. They are now called Long Range Planning for School Improvement (LRPSI) and are described by the deputy secretary of the PDE "as the guts around which school improvement is built."

The LRPSI had a "traumatic birth" because of inter-departmental conflicts between the LRP staff and the commissioner for basic education. The LRP personnel wanted the process to be highly definitive; the commissioner wanted the emphasis to be placed on providing general guidelines, not firm directions, for action. It appears that the loose approach held sway.

Long Range Planning for School Improvement will involve administrators, teachers, students, and community persons. A new feature is an expansion of local building level involvement. LRPSI will have districts plan in several areas: curriculum, employment, personnel development, enrollment, facilities, and finances and nondistrict resources. Persons working in each area will assess their activities and make plans for the future. Although these activities have been part of the long

range planning process for several years, LRPSI requires that the district plan include building plans formed in the context of district goals.

The district will first assess the seven areas. This assessment will estabish priorities using information from EQA, standardized tests, surveys, reports, and staff and community perceptions of needs. Once priorities are identified, district and building plans are developed. Building plans are structured into the total district plan. Both levels of plans should indicate what will be done, when it will be completed, and how it will be evaluated. Districts participating in the School Improvement Program submit a Long Range Plan for School Improvement for every school building.

Although long range planning has been in the state for some time, the PDE hopes the School Improvement focus will create an environment in which these plans will have greater meaning for the districts. Many districts have complied with the LRP mandate by hiring outside consultants to prepare plans for the district.

School Improvement advocates hope that their program will lead schools to take these plans more seriously.

II. DISSEMINATION IN DEVELOPMENT SEAS

Development SEAs have reorganized to pursue an integrated school improvement strategy. Integrated efforts are designed to deal with local schools as a whole and, therefore, involve substantial and ongoing coordination among several divisions, branches, or bureaus within the SEA.

We can distinguish SEAs' integrated school improvement efforts further by their use of dissemination. Some SEA improvement efforts employ dissemination only as a secondary, tactical support for a comprehensive program designed on principles and assumptions other than dissemination. Other efforts use dissemination as their generic strategy for bringing about change in local schools. The definition of dissemination is crucial here. We view it as the attempt to improve schools by deliberately introducing products, practices, and/or information -- either exemplary practices or the outcomes of R&D -- that have been developed and evaluated in a setting other than the targeted school. This definition goes beyond spread of information and awareness to the actual implementation and continuation of new practices in local schools.

A. Dissemination as Tactical Support in Development SEAs

In our sample, there were two states which clearly fell within the category of development SEAS which use dissemination as tactical support. Maryland provides an example of an objective-focused development SEA which so uses dissemination; California represents a process-focused SEA using dissemination in a similar fashion. Arizona appears to fall on the fringe of this category, in part because its plan was still in the formative stages and in part because the NDN state facilitator was located outside the SEA. But while it acknowledged a role for dissemination activities, its emphasis was clearly elsewhere.

Some SEAs begin with their dissemination system and add other components to it to create a school improvement program. As we shall see in Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, such SEAs had service delivery systems already in place because of their dissemination activities; broadening the functions of these was a relatively easy thing to do. This was not the case in Maryland; as we have seen, Project Basic created a whole new service delivery system, partly in an effort to operate more efficiently by bypassing traditional bureaucratic channels. Indeed, the CSSO was wary of creating a generalized dissemination system independent of specific goals of its use. Moreover, the NDN state facilitator project in Maryland was located outside the SEA. Arizona's situation was quite similar -- it, too, had no dissemination system before embarking on its Basic Skills Plan and the Arizona SF was not affiliated with the SEA.

California's developmental history was somewhat different: the SEA was an early experimenter with dissemination -- for example, it participated in NIE's RDU project -- and the NDN state facilitator project was located in the SEA. But the leadership of the SEA wanted literally to empower LEAs to pursue their own school improvement goals and therefore eschewed dissemination strategies as top-down and solution-oriented rather than bottom-up and problem-oriented. Nevertheless, as one state official remarked, when schools have gone through the CSIP, identified their problems through a holistic rather than a fragmentary process, then the NDN resource pool is a good place to look for practices to fill the gaps that have been identified. So while California did not emphasize dissemination, neither did it disregard its utility altogether.

Excerpts from the site reports describe in more detail the use of dissemination as tactical support in these SEAs.

1. Maryland

As we have already discussed, although he is one of the more active chiefs in mobilizing the state agency for school improvement, David Hornbeck has fundamental reservations about educational dissemination, whether as information services or the diffusion of exemplary practices. He believes that for an organization to focus

on dissemination as such tends to displace attention away from attacking particular programmatic objectives and toward inventing processes, structures, and mechanisms, the institutionalization of which often becomes more important than achieving the goals for which they were initially conceived. By temperment, Hornbeck concentrates intensely on doing a few major things that have direct impact upon schools, and is skeptical about bureaucrats who set up generalized mechanisms for doing a lot of diffuse things all related somehow to improving schools. To him, the federal focus on dissemination represents the tendency of large organizations to displace their ends by over-routinizing the means for accomplishing them.

Hornbeck thinks there is too much "dissemination for the sake of dissemination." This arises from an undue focus on "process" and bureaucratic technique compared with a substantive or "programmatic" orientation to school improvement. "As frequently happens," stressed Hornbeck, people end up "disseminating and diffusing that which is the easiest to disseminate and diffuse, because the objective is to disseminate and diffuse, rather than picking what it is that you want, and figuring out the best way to get that out there."

Hornbeck is not enthusiastic about diffusing models of exemplary practice for three reasons. First, he believes that most of the data from local projects are "soft." Indeed, he is skeptical about the utility of most research in education -- "even when designed rigorously, which in most cases I believe it is not" -- when formulating his approach to policy issues. Second, he believes that "most projects are not replicated anyhow," and that "the state is not even near having the controls" to assure replication. The third reason Hornbeck is not excited about validation and diffusion relates to economic priorities.

> We tend to think that what little money we have is better spent "doing stuff," rather than paying somebody who has already "done stuff" to go and tell somebody else, who doesn't have the money anyway, how they can do it too.

Asked whether his approach to dissemination reflects the small size of his state, Hornbeck admitted that "While it is probably easier to take my view in Maryland, I thought this way in Pennsylvania when I was there." Hornbeck's approach to school improvement, which he developed in Pennsylvania and refined in Maryland, uses the state's power to mandate, reinforced by sustained assistance for local implementation. Mandates should focus on the substantive goals of instruction, while the assistance

should be designed to help locals find their own way to fulfill the mandates. The state should determine what the results of schooling should be, and the locals should determine how they are going to get those results. In Hornbeck's view, it is important for the state to help local implementation efforts by, among other things, making it easier for locals to learn from each other's experience.

This does not mean, however, that the MSDE does not use dissemination, but that it is used to support school improvement efforts rather than to form the basis of those efforts. The State Capacity Building Project in Maryland provides an example of the way in which the SEA uses dissemination in its school improvement efforts.

Project LIFE is an acronym for Library Information Functional Exchange and constitutes Maryland's State Capacity Building Project. After its first proposal to NIE failed in 1977, the task force that wrote it sought the help of Research for Better Schools (RBS) in putting together a second attempt the following year. This proposal played down the technological approach of the first, and instead focused on building a network of linkers in both the county offices and the divisions of the state department. NIE liked the idea, and awarded a $119,000 grant to the MSDE that fall. At the time of our fieldwork, Project LIFE was beginning its third year with federal funding amounting to $94,000.

Project LIFE is based in the State Media Services Center, which is under one of two branches in the Division of Library Development and Services of the MSDE. Its primary function is to negotiate and conduct on-line searches of national databases for SEA, county office, and local school staffs.

Although Project LIFE is much smaller than Project Basic, it has a similar organizational structure. The project serves its clients through two sets of linkers, one based in MSDE divisions and the other based in county offices. The State Media Services Center asked county library media staff and MSDE division heads to designate someone to serve as the LIFE linker for that unit. No money is provided in exchange for the added responsibilities. Most linkers hold positions such as media supervisor or materials and information specialist. With support from RBS, the LIFE staff conducted four half-day seminars for their local linkers between May and September 1979 on Promising Practices and Program Validation, Change Agentry, Dissemination as School Improvement, and Techniques for Synthesis. During and since this time, the State Media Services staff has been working out formal and informal rules with the linkers about the screening and negotiation of on-line searches, as well as

follow-up assistance in securing the documents the clients actually want. Their initiative in the third year is to provide workshops on linkage skills to as many building-based media specialists as possible. They are also trying to make MSDE branch chiefs more aware of their services with the expectation that they will support the work of their linkers, and reinforce its value among others they supervise.

Project LIFE is limited by its location in the organization. It is below the branch chief level within the support division of the MSDE. This division is not represented on the crucial Instruction Coordinating Council (ICC). From its sub-branch status, it has been difficult to command the attention of other branch chiefs and division heads, and thus implement its coordination objectives for the whole agency. In addition, Project LIFE appeared on the scene in 1979 with the goal of creating an integrated SEA-wide communication network that would facilitate informative exchange between all MSDE divisions and all the 24 counties. In view of organizational reality, this image embedded in the proposal was clearly overblown. It suggests centralizing the channels of information from between state and county levels through a generalized conduit linking the State Media Services Center and 24 county library media supervisors.

The gap between rhetoric and reality became a problem in the start-up phase when the State Media Services Center tried to interpret the broader concept of Project LIFE, which they only partially understood themselves, to the library and media people who were designated to be LIFE linkers. Training linkers to do computer searches occurred in the context of discussions about change agentry. Some counties already had these services, and were bemused by the SEA's belated entry into the field. Other counties encountered these services for the first time, and had a lot to learn. The original intention of putting local linkers in touch with MSDE linkers through the Media Services Center proved very difficult to implement. LIFE had no administrative control over the linkers, and had to rely on their willingness to take the role seriously and identify with the goals of the project. Consequently, the linkers played out their roles differently from county to county. This, in turn, created complications for the media center staff in the MSDE, who felt they had to "stroke" linkers to get cooperation, and establish uniform procedures to make their own operation efficient. As in other aspects of state-county relations in Maryland, the wide range of differences among a small number of organizational units makes for informal arrangements and many exceptions to every rule.

Project LIFE has provided needed staff development to many media specialists, and promoted a new, more proactive image of their profession's role in improving schools. Some of this amounts to a new professional rhetoric, and some of it will have beneficial behavioral consequences as well. LIFE is likely to reinforce the image of the MSDE as a resource, a place where local educators might think to go when they need information. The project is socializing educators and bureaucrats in the habits of the computerized handling of information.

Within the SEA, Project LIFE gives the Media Services Center greater visibility among divisional staff as an information source, and creates occasions for information specialists in different sectors of the state bureaucracy to meet and exchange knowledge about their craft. Launching the project has reinforced the belief among its organizers that media and information services have to become more proactive to support educators who are trying to improve schools. They stress that linkers must actively support the basic facilitators and the local implementation teams by supplying informational resources keyed to implementing competency-based curriculum. LIFE has already prepared information packages for the SITIP institutes on their own initiative. Project LIFE is aware that it must demonstrate that information services have value to clients if they are to be funded beyond the end of federal money. They have managed to get one of the four LIFE positions established on the state budget, which is the first step in climbing off uncertain federal money.

2. California

The California State Department of Education's involvement in dissemination activities fostering school improvement has evolved through several stages of development. Seeming to parallel federal efforts in this regard, the SEA's emphasis has shifted from the collection and dissemination of informational resources, to the identification and adoption of exemplary practices, and most currently in keeping with the essence of the California School Improvement Program, to the development of problem-solving capacity at the local site level.

In explaining this difference in emphasis, the deputy superintendent of the Educational Program Branch drew a distinction between the classical or traditional dissemination approach exemplified by Title IV-C and the NDN, and the more comprehensive "mainline impact" approach California was now attempting to promote. He contended that although the Title IV-C and NDN dissemination strategies were useful and still important

in efforts to promote school improvement in California, they provided "a slow means to initiating change at the classroom level." Essentially, his argument revolved around the notion that a traditional dissemination approach usually relied on the interest in a project of one or two local district or school administrators. The chosen exemplary project or practice was then filtered down to individual classroom teachers very slowly and without the teachers' investment in its adoption.

He argues that the more "mainline impact" approach exemplified by the school improvement program and the consolidated application strategy would have impact immediately on local schools. A process is disseminated in this strategy which is designed to promote local problem-solving capacity at individual school sites. Therefore, all of the school's constituencies would become invested in determining school needs and developing and implementing solutions to school problems. Teachers would then have the necessary incentive, investment, and support to immediately utilize commonly agreed upon practices or programs in their classrooms.

Also, this "mainline impact" strategy was termed by the deputy superintendent a "holistic" approach which forced people to consider comprehensive school plans. In so doing, they would determine a mixture of program components that would ensure the best education for the children in their schools. One consequence of this, although not mentioned directly by him, is that practitioners would be more publicly and directly accountable for their performance and the learning outcomes of their students. Everyone would be more aware of what part each program component was playing in the overall educational plan and what were the expected goals of that program.

Despite this shift in emphasis away from informational resources and exemplary practice and toward the creation of problem-solving capacity, Title IV-C and NDN seem to be solidly integrated within the operations of the SEA. From our sense of the distinction between the two approaches to dissemination laid out by this deputy superintendent, we would suggest that they do not appear to be at all contradictory, and, in fact, probably work very well together. As noted by a member of the state facilitator project, "the School Improvement Program is forcing people to consider their needs in a more rational search procedure. When they've identified their needs, they're able to turn to the NDN or Title IV-C and ask for programs to meet those needs." What this suggests and this state facilitator staff member confirms, is that CSIP is the education program in California -- it is the

umbrella -- and Title IV-C and NDN, though ignored by some officials, fit quite well under it. The two approaches to dissemination fostering school improvement which we saw in California do not seem to exist in opposition to each other. Rather, the classical dissemination strategy of Title IV-C and NDN and the "mainline impact" aproach of CSIP and the consolidated application seem to be integrated in a generally supportive manner.

3. Arizona

Generally, traditional dissemination activities, such as information and product dissemination, will play an increasing role in Arizona's previously discussed basic skills effort once the plan moves into the implementation stage in the fall of 1980. In recognition of this, the directors of Title IV-C and the SCBP are members of the SEA's Basic Skills Task Force which serves as an in-house advisory group for the SEA's efforts.

We could forecast that the Basic Skills Plan with its product development components and required student competency objectives will draw attention to already developed exemplary programs to help districts achieve these objectives. In concert with the recently required state testing program and the CUES, the basic skills effort may force districts to look more to the SEA and the NDN for adoptable program models in the basic skills area. As noted by the director of CUES, the "model idea is a useful one in terms of what we're trying to do with basic skills. We need to not reinvent the wheel every time we need a basic skills program."

Within the SEA, there are a number of dissemination activities which support the current school improvement efforts. For example, the State Capacity Building Program project, headed by the director of dissemination, has, in part, been utilized to develop the basis for a department-wide valid practices file with a basic skills focus. The goals of this file development activity are: 1) the collection of outstanding practices as identified by Migrant Education, Title I, Bilingual, etc.; 2) the validation of these practices by some state-based validation procedure; and 3) the creation of strategies to make these practices available to local districts for adoption. At the time of our fieldwork, the file was still in a developmental phase, and permanent funding was being sought to initiate and sustain it.

In March 1977, all library-type resources were merged into one unit, the Educational Information Center. This brought together the resources from the research

coordinating unit, the professional library, and the Instructional Materials Center for Special Education as well as the circulating collections from Right to Read, Free Enterprise, Bilingual Education, and the Career Education Clearinghouse. The main function of the center is to search and retrieve answers and materials upon request, using resources available within the SEA and through other sources within the state. Its primary emphasis is in the areas of educational administration and curriculum and instruction. In gearing up for the new basic skills emphasis, the Educational Information Center will include a separate section of resources in the basic skills area.

Housed in the instructional services division, the Consultant Cadre has been described as a "master teacher exchange program." It is essentially a cross-indexed file of over 800 teachers and others who have consented to be available for providing information and technical assistance to teachers in the state on specific problems. The consultant cadre has been in operation since 1972 and several of our respondents noted the success of this activity.

Similarly, Arizona's Title IV-C program has been described by federal IV-C staff as a highly successful effort. Title IV-C staff work closely with both the Arizona State Facilitator Project and Title I, particularly in regard to the adoption program and they have been successful in assisting local districts in the adoption process.

Asked about the central thrust of the Title IV-C program in Arizona, an official stated "We really can't separate the superintendent's priorities from the IV-C thrust . . . and the adopter program lends itself very well to the superintendent's emphasis on basic skills." In fact, IV-C's emphasis has moved to a basic skills emphasis almost to the exclusion of all others. Consequently, it appears that Title IV-C funding will be directed almost exclusively to reinforcing the SEA's basic skills focus.

B. Dissemination as a Generic Strategy in Development SEAs

In our sample of states, at least two SEAs -- both process-focused development agencies -- attempted to create systems of resource and assistance provision. In Illinois, the generic dissemination strategy centered on assistance to schools, while Pennsylvania was trying to combine external assistance with local capacity development within the schools -- an ambitious program. Michigan -- an objective-focused development SEA -- can also be classified as an agency where dissemination constituted a generic strategy for change.

These three SEAs were all early experimenters with dissemination and worked to set up regional service systems for the delivery of assistance to school districts. Illinois was in the first cohort of State Capacity Building Program states in 1975; Michigan's emphasis began even earlier in a Title III grant and was supplemented by SCBP and RDU projects in 1976. Pennsylvania, an RDU project state, began its system in 1974. Beginning in 1975, a four-pronged system was created in Illinois to actively provide development information resources, assistance, and funds to school districts working to identify problems -- through the Illinois Problems Index, for example -- and seek solutions. The Program, Planning, and Development Division of the IOE LEA Services Department identified and developed programs in appropriate subject areas. The Illinois Resource and Dissemination Network aimed to be the major source of educational information in the state; its priority was supporting the activities of the Program Services Teams. These teams provided generalized assistance -- including detailed knowledge of IOE operations -- to school districts. The Illinois Centers for Educational Improvement operated with Title IV-C monies to fund improvement efforts by LEAs.

In addition to the SEA services focused on problem identification, the NDN state facilitator project offered solutions in the form of validated practices. As the excerpt below explains, the two approaches competed with one another in some ways but were ultimately complementary modes of school improvement.

Pennsylvania's diffusion network was operated by the SEA with Title IV-C funds and sought to identify, validate, and disseminate Pennsylvania-developed exemplary practices. The SEA also supported adoption or adaption grants for school districts desiring to implement new practices. The Pennsylvania Department of Education's SCBP project, begun in 1978, was intended to coordinate several other dissemination activities including the NDN state facilitator project, which was located in an intermediate unit.

Michigan's system, clearly the earliest in our sample to be developed, was based on reactive and proactive strategies, the first included in the Michigan Education Resources Information Center, the second in the Michigan Adoption Program (MAP). The Michigan state facilitator project was part of the MAP; services for the NDN and other components were delivered through the system.

Let us now turn to excerpts from the case studies that describe these dissemination efforts in more detail. Illinois offers a unique opportunity to study two different dissemination systems at work within the same state and political culture and will therefore be discussed in more detail than Pennsylvania and Michigan.

1. Illinois

The NDN has a strong state facilitator project in the state and the Illinois Office of Education (IOE) has developed an extensive and coordinated dissemination system. While both operations are funded exclusively from federal sources, their goals and strategies for dissemination differ in significant ways. Sometimes they conflict: other times they complement one another. The differences in their approach to dissemination reflect the differences in their organizational structures and missions for school improvement.

In a fundamental sense, the NDN begins with bona fide solutions and searches for problems. The Illinois diffusion system, on the other hand, begins with bona fide problems and searches out solutions.

The NDN is administered at the federal level. It begins with innovations that have been validated by the JDRP, and devises strategies and structures to install and replicate them in local schools. Only projects developed with federal dollars may become eligible for dissemination in the NDN. A major goal of the NDN is to establish an ongoing link between educational R & D and local school practice. It is a delivery system for innovative products and practices. This structure stresses "quality control" over the efficiency of the innovation through the rites of validation. The NDN formally values fidelity to the validated innovation in the implementation process. Success is measured by the number of adoptions secured.

The intrinsic logic of the NDN's system moves from solutions to problems. As a federal program administered in the USOE, NDN is uniquely positioned to identify and diffuse innovations across state lines. Its position of advantage relative to the innovations, however, is also a position of disadvantage relative to the sites which adopt them. The NDN does not have the resources or authority to develop the kind of thorough and ongoing service relationship to individual LEAs that a comprehensive school improvement program must have.

Somewhat similar to the NDN effort, the Illinois SEA has reorganized itself as a delivery system for innovative services to LEAs. The IOE's goal is to forge new, reciprocal links between itself and LEAs through a decentralized pattern of regional service teams. The pivot of this movement is planning. The Illinois Problem Index (IPI) is a diffusion strategy for introducing a new managerial culture in LEAs. It is a process tool to help local school leaders to identify problems and formulate

goals for school improvement in a rational and consensual manner. The intrinsic logic of IOE's diffusion system moves from problems to solutions.

SEA staff have not invested heavily in education R&D. Rather, they have invested themselves in changing the patterns by which information flows between themselves and the LEAs in their state. Their structure stresses "quality control" over the planning through which school leaders set policies for school improvement. The SEA is the designer and facilitator of the planning process. As LEA leaders adapt their administrative behavior to use it, they inevitably come to rely upon the services of the SEA, and begin to look toward the SEA as the source of the solutions that fit the problems they have defined. This change of orientation coincides with the changing ratio of state to local funding in Illinois. The SEA is less concerned with validation and the fidelity of implementation than with fostering a responsiveness in LEAs to the policy initiatives for school improvement established by the SEA. Dissemination, as conducted by the IOE, plays a crucial role in their plans for decentralizing the service functions and centralizing the policy functions of the SEA.

The NDN's facilitator and the IOE's dissemination system have both competed with, and benefited from, one another's activities. Each provides the other with resources that are important for accomplishing their respective goals. The NDN and the Illinois dissemination systems operate as ironic extensions of one another. The Illinois SF project no longer deals directly with LEAs, but provides training and access to programs to the Program Services Team members who do deal directly with the LEAs. By decentralizing its service delivery functions, the SEA has built a vehicle for dissemination that the NDN does not have the capacity to develop.

Despite these inventive arrangements for mutual benefit, there remain significant sources of conflict that set the two dissemination systems at odds. There are three fundamentally divisive issues that lurk beneath the rhetorical exchanges in this conflict. The first issue concerns the appropriate relationship between federal and state authorities in administering a dissemination program, e.g., whether resources for the NDN facilitator project ought to be invested outside the IOE. The second issue concerns the appropriate relationship between public authority and private enterprise in facilitating school improvement. The third issue concerns fundamental strategy for school improvement: should one install externally developed innovations (solutions in search of problems), or should one facilitate the indigenous development of innovations (problems in search of solutions)?

The IOE has affirmed the values of comprehensiveness and equity for its school improvement efforts. Its primary goal, according to the executive deputy superintendent of education, is "a leveling-up process -- if the worst district or school is made as good as the average, we've made a giant leap forward." The goal for dissemination is to reduce the educational and social disparity between the school systems that are already well endowed with the resources and skills for innovation, and the school systems that have long been too remote, or otherwise incapable of processing new information and securing outside resources for change. Hence the great emphasis in the IOE on spreading grantsmanship skills equally around the state. As the ratio of state to local funds shifts in favor of the state, it becomes more important in the IOE's view that these backward districts develop indigenous leadership that will draw them out of the periphery, and closer to the center of school improvement efforts, i.e., the SEA. For this reason, the IOE's dissemination system appears at times more like fostering indigenous innovation than diffusing externally developed innovations.

In contrast to the IOE, the NDN style of dissemination, which focuses on the externally developed innovation, tends to build upon the organizational infrastructures for improvement efforts that already exist in the more progressive and advantaged school systems in the state. As in other states, most of the NDN's adoptions in Illinois occur in suburban areas and along main corridors of urbanization that cut through the state. Cook County has not been responsive to the NDN's style of diffusion. Many areas of southern Illinois have also stayed outside the NDN's reach, despite the fact that the facilitator project is located in that region.

The major responsibility for the Illinois dissemination and assistance system rests with LEA Services Division, created by State Superintendent Cronin. LEA Services has three divisions: the Illinois Resource and Dissemination Network, the Program Services Teams, and the Program, Planning and Development Division. We will describe each of these in turn.

The Illinois Resource and Dissemination Network (IRDN) is a central component of the Illinois diffusion system. IRDN may be characterized as "an education information storage, classification, and retrieval system" or more simply as the education resources "bank" for the state. The system is designed to assist local educators by providing them knowledge and resources necessary to solve their own educational problems. The emphasis is upon helping LEAs develop their own agenda. The IRDN not only seeks to establish itself as one available clearinghouse; it intends to become the major source of educational information in the state.

The IRDN has three principal functions: 1) to identify and acquire information about all educational resources within the IOE and the State of Illinois for inclusion in the Illinois Resources File (IRF); 2) to store, index, and catalogue the IRF, other data bases, and other information resources within the Education Information Center (EIC); and, 3) to provide support to the Program Services Teams by assisting them and the LEAs to use the contents of the IRF and the EIC for problem-solving, and to coordinate the dissemination of IOE and LEA resources throughout the state. Its primary clients are LEAs.

The Illinois Resource File (IRF) collects information on human and material resources. This information is gathered through the Human Resource Identification Survey (HRIS) and the Illinois Resource Identification Survey (IRIS). The IRDN has embarked on two major tasks in its efforts to build the IRF. The first is to accumulate and centralize all the human and material resources which exist throughout the IOE. The second is to search out and collect all useful external educational resources in the state for inclusion in the IRF. To this end, the IRDN has negotiated with numerous organizations, including NDN, ERIC, and ILLINET, to acquire access to their data bases.

The Education Information Center (EIC) is located in the IOE Library, and cooperates with the IOE Media and Resources Center (MARC) located in the same vicinity. The EIC maintains a large collection of curriculum materials and texts, professional books, and more than 350 professional journals, and provides access to numerous data bases.

Direct support for the linking activities of the PSTs is mentioned as the most important function of the IRDN effort. To this end, team members are trained to know the general content of the Network (including the IRF), and the range of informational services that it can provide to local educators.

Providing the leadership within the IOE to coordinate and consolidate intra-agency resources is clearly the domain of the IRDN. Besides coordinating department training for designated team members, the IRDN negotiates the assignment of the IOE department personnel to act as the liaison between that department and the PSTs. This function suggests the centrality of the IRDN as the communication system of the IOE.

A dissemination committee was appointed by the executive deputy superintendent to outline IOE's dissemination policy and recommend specific methods. This committee is designed to provide further "clout" for the IRDN's internal agency coordination efforts. The committee

recommended emphasizing the coordination and consolidation of all agency dissemination activity, the production of specific dissemination plans from each section, and the in-service training of all agency staff concerning the dissemination structure and operation. These activities will be led by the IRDN staff.

Finally, the IRDN disseminates information by producing and distributing materials. It works with several IOE committees and subcommittees to produce "readi-reference" packets of materials on timely subjects and oversees the production of brochures and journal articles about the network. It also publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, The Source, which informs local educators of recent additional services and interesting new programs available within the network.

The Program Services Teams (PSTs) are the field agents of the IOE. As the working link between the LEAs and the SEA, the PSTs are the key to the IOE's dissemination system. The other parts of the dissemination system -- the IRDN, PP&D, and the ICEIs -- are all designed to provide support services to the teams. The PSTs are meant to be the proactive arms and legs of the agency. Their task is to make state services more readily available to LEAs, while assisting them to comply with mandates demonstrating state and federal educational concerns, issues, and opportunities (including funding sources).

State Superintendent Cronin wanted to create a proactive intermediate structure between the state capital and the local school districts which would energize and speed up the delivery of educational services, and thereby stimulate the process of school improvement. After analyzing the whole agency, he drew together the technical assistance staff from each section of the IOE, including Title I, Title IV-C, Special Education, Curriculum Development, etc., and fashioned them into the five Program Services Teams of field agents. The regulatory function from these new field agents was removed, thus eliminating the ambiguity in their role and improving their image with the client LEAs. Cronin centralized the formal regulatory function in the Department of Supervision and Recognition, and raised the salary of the PST members to equal what the regulators received. This tangibly demonstrated Cronin's belief that "regulation is not more important than service or leadership."

This reorganization shifted the emphasis from specialized expertise to "generalist" skills in working with all IOE program areas and organization procedures. Specialized expertise was centralized in the support activities of

the IRDN, PP&D, and other departments in Springfield. However, each team also functions as a regional resource pool. Each team member has a detailed knowledge of the agency and its resources, a perspective normally available only to high-ranking administrators. The services provided by each team include: direct assistance in preparation of proposals for grants under Title I, Title IV-C, Gifted Education, etc.; assistance in needs assessment, planning, and problem-solving through the use of the IPI; identification of resources, assistance in program development, and in-service training; dissemination of IOE publications, guidelines, regulations, and other information; and communication of local concerns to IOE departments.

Some form of planning is required for LEA participation in the programs that are offered through the state. This requirement serves as both a rationale and a quality control mechanism to justify the allocation of funds. The preferred instrument for planning and assessment is the Illinois Problems Index. Each PST consultant has become familiar with this process, and one member of each team acts as the team consultant on IPI. Although IPI is not mandated, its use is continually encouraged. Every team consultant is instructed to persuade at least one of his/her districts to complete it. The success of this effort apparently has been marginal.

The PSTs play ambiguous roles. They are supposed to be responsive to local needs, but they are also expected to be proactive in disseminating programs and practices related to the policy initiatives of the IOE. Insofar as they promote NDN programs, they also function proactively toward LEAs.

The Program, Planning and Development Division (PP&D) is the third major division under the LEA Services Division and has primary responsibility for identifying and developing program themes and topics. The essential task of PP&D is "providing human and financial resources" to the LEAs for program and curriculum content, both directly and through coordination with the other divisions of the system (i.e., the IRDN and the PSTs). PP&D accomplishes this task through four major activities: (a) developing resources for training the PSTs and consultants; (b) raising funds for specific curriculum areas; (c) publishing curriculum materials and newsletters (although this function is diminishing); and (d) advising regional superintendents and the ICEIs on program development.

In addition to the components of the LEA Services Division, there are the Illinois Centers for Education Improvement (ICEIs), one of the most innovative and

controversial parts of the Illinois diffusion system. The seven centers have been operational only since the fall of 1978. Their primary function is to provide a decentralized resource link in support of the Program Services Teams and to assist in the implementation of programs developed by PP&D and/or retrieved from the resource files of the IRDN. In order to obtain a program grant from the ICEI (and these are considered to be non-competitive), an LEA is required to perform at least a minimal planning effort (if not a full-scale needs assessment such as the IPI) and document its request using a standard packet of simple forms that are designed to stimulate logical thinking.

The purpose of the centers as set forth in public literature is to "assist each school district to develop a capacity for self-renewal" by providing (a) in-service training for staff, and (b) exemplary programs for adoption/adaptation made available through the IRDN or the NDN. The centers also assist in documenting needs assessment through several different formats that are available.

The ICEIs are funded on a competitive bid basis by the IOE using the 15% discretionary funds for administration available to the State of Illinois by Title IV-C, ESEA. This amounts to a total of approximately $4 million dollars divided among the seven centers. Each center, in turn, funds its region's LEAs in small grants meant to be supplementary seed money in amounts from as little as $60 to as much as $5,000. In the past, when Title IV-C grants were awarded directly to LEAs through competitive RFPs, only about 80 districts out of the 1016 in the state were getting all the money because they were more adept at grantsmanship. Now, through the ICEI system, the IOE can provide assistance on a larger scale. Working in tandem, PSTs and the centers can advise an LEA how it can get $500 or $1,000 or $3,000 for a workshop, program, or curriculum evaluation effort.

Although funded by the IOE, structurally the ICEIs are relatively independent of the IOE's operational structure. The centers are chosen by competitive bidding from amongst all interested LEAs and the 57 regional superintendents. The centers have directors and some clerical staff, but are mainly the direct reflections of their governing boards who set policy guidelines with advice and direction from the IOE. These boards are meant to have a very broad base of involvement and are composed of all the district and regional superintendents within their administrative region, plus representatives of parents, non-public shools, special education, private agencies, and school board members.

The principal motivation behind the creation of the ICEIs is a desire to distribute program and financial resources more broadly in order to stimulate innovative responses to targeted curriculum areas. Also, it is meant to encourage LEAs to become more involved in planning and needs assessment, while

allowing more local participation in program formulation and implementation. This participation bolsters the effectiveness of IOE policy while simultaneously allowing programs to be adapted to both local needs and local creativity. As State Superintendent Cronin stated,

> We tried to figure out how to shortcut the usual procedure of districts applying for Title IV-C grants and waiting two to four years for validation and then (another) ten or twenty years being spread around until the last teacher finds out. The (LEAs) wanted it to be only four or five years and Title IV-C money is used to lubricate the process.

The controversial side to these centers is precisely this "lubricant," i.e., Title IV-C money. Usually, LEAs compete directly for Title IV-C grants once a year with the strict stipulation that the funds may not be used for administrative costs instead of for programs. The IOE wanted to find a way to link resources, especially money, with their dissemination structure of PSTs and IRDN on a continuing basis. The first attempt to create centers two years ago was aborted when DHEW lawyers were alarmed by the potential problem that funds appropriated for program purposes could be diverted for administrative purposes. Although a cease and desist order prevented the establishment of the proposed Regional Information Centers, the IOE fought the issue for a year.

Finally, the DHEW general counsel's office permitted the creation of the ICEIs when the governing boards and fiscal agents were included as monitors over the proper use of the funds. As a result of this experience, the ICEIs are not referred to as R&D centers, but only service centers for school improvement without frills -- very basic and practical. The centers have been instructed to remain entirely in a "responsive mode" working with the PSTs who help districts prioritize their needs and then go to a center "to purchase a solution."

2. Pennsylvania

Dissemination has an important role in the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) conception of school improvement.

> Successful dissemination of educational information, i.e., primary programs, instructional articles, materials, etc. is an essential ingredient for the School Improvement process . . . It is clear that educators must be aware of alternative practices and programs before they are in a position to adapt or adopt

them. (A Proposed Plan to Develop a Network to Coordinate Dissemination and Diffusion of Educational Improvement Activities in Pennsylvania, Jan. 1, 1980)

The rationale in Shape 1, the first stage of Pennsylvania's School Improvement Program was that

> Research shows there is much we can do to help students learn better . . . Instructional programs have been designed to insure the successful learning of the basic skills by every child regardless of parents income or race. School administrators can be helped to adopt innovations successfully . . . (Pennsylvania School Improvement Program, Shape 1)

These statements indicate the importance of dissemination activities to the School Improvement Program. The PDE's involvement in dissemination did not begin with the School Improvement Program, however. The PDE had already instituted the Pennsylvania Diffusion Network in 1974. Operated under Title IV-C, the network includes validated projects from across the commonwealth. Districts may nominate themselves, or PDE division can nominate projects believed to be exemplary. A validation panel of 27 members works much like the JDRP. Only about one-third of the programs submitted for review have been validated. Once validated, a district's program will receive $500 and no operational money. The PDE makes Title IV-C grants of about $6000 for districts that want to adopt or adapt validated programs.

A new program has recently been added to the Pennsylvania Diffusion Program. The Validation and Information on Validated Educational Developed Programs (VIVED) initiative was developed in conjunction with the PDE's school improvement focus. The VIVED Program encourages educators to visit validated projects. Some teachers may learn about the successful educational practices which they can personally implement in their classrooms. They can also decide to adopt or adapt the entire validated practice through the Diffusion Program. Funds from ESEA Title IV-C and Special Education are used for Adopter/Adapter grants. Secretary John Pittinger established a Steering Committee for Dissemination in 1975. The committee was charged with developing a plan for a statewide dissemination system to be coordinated and led by the PDE. Although the PDE did not adopt a plan at that time, interest in dissemination remained high.

First funded in 1978, Pennsylvania's State Capacity Building Program proposal to NIE was written by the Educational Quality Assessment (EQA) staff. Their major objective was to obtain extra funds to help with data interpretation. According to the current director of the SCBP project, there were actually three foci in the first three years: train intermediate unit staff to assist local school people in interpreting their students' scores on the EQA; coordinate the PDE's efforts in dissemination through a dissemination council; and develop a file for Pennsylvania-specific exemplary practices using the Pennsylvania Diffusion Plan as a prototype.

The SCBP project is still cooperating with the EQA providing travel money for EQA staff. However, the major emphasis of the program under school improvement is now to create a mechanism for coordinating dissemination activities in the PDE and in three intermediate units that function as information resource centers. They are Research and Information Services for Education (RISE), Pennsylvania Resources and Information Center for Special Education (PRISE), and the Vocational Educational Information Network (VEIN).

RISE is located in the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit outside Philadelphia. It began in 1965 as an ESEA Title III Project serving Bucks and Montgomery counties with educational information and dissemination services. In 1970, RISE was funded as a statewide project serving all practitioners in basic education throughout the commonwealth. The center has bibliographies, education journals, and access to the ERIC, DIALOG, and Xerox information systems. In addition, it houses the state facilitator project of the NDN. RISE therefore combines information services with the more proactive dissemination of exemplary practices.

Pennsylvania Resources and Information Center for Special Education (PRISE) grew out of RISE, and remains housed in the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit. PRISE makes information available to professionals serving the handicapped. The three service areas are literature searching, dissemination via comprehensive newsletter, and evaluation assistance. PRISE is related to the Bureau of Special Education in Harrisburg.

The Vocational Educational Information Network (VEIN) is located at Millersville State College in the south-central part of the state. VEIN operates in conjunction with the Research Coordinating Unit of the PDE. It serves practitioners in vocational technical education and adult education.

The first statewide plan for dissemination was submitted by the steering committee for dissemination in September, 1976. Although there was interest in the PDE, it did not receive sufficient support from Secretary Pittinger to insure its implementation.

Pittinger essentially "killed dissemination in the state for awhile" by not acting on the plan. "Pitt had other priorities. He was process-oriented. He thought local districts needed to develop their own resources." In January, 1980, and members from the Division of Education Planning and Bureau of School Improvement proposed a similar statewide plan through the School Improvement Program. Like the dissemination planners before them, they argued that it is

> . . .appropriate that the Pennsylvania Department of Education assume the role of the chief coordinating agency for a system for the delivery of educational dissemination services to users in Pennsylvania . . . The department can best provide the effective unbiased leadership necessary to create and maintain the impetus toward a unitary dissemination system which will prevent the fragmentation of user groups, the proliferation of information data bases and services, the infusion of users in the field and economically wasteful duplication of efforts . . . . This can be best accomplished by the establishment and maintenance of a single comprehensive information dissemination system. (A Proposed Plan to Develop a Network to Coordinate Dissemination and Diffusion of Educational Improvement Activities in Pennsylvania, Jan. 1, 1980)

Recommendations from the new plan have been incorporated into the new PDE Resource Center for School Improvement. Developed by the Bureau of Press and Communications and the Dissemination Council, the resource center will do six things: (a) coordinate the information resources within the PDE; (b) act as a centralized access point for locating publications, journals, etc., received by PDE staff; (c) display selected PDE publications and a core collection of primary PDE information resources; (d) act as a PDE link to information services such as RISE, PRISE, VEIN, and the state library; (e) act as a clearinghouse for the dissemination of information within the PDE about major PDE programs and projects; and (f) act as a centralized point for PDE school improvement field representatives to access information about technical assistance and educational programs that work. Funding for the center comes from Title IV-C, RISE, and the SCBP grant.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the center is its formal link to the external information services, such as RISE, PRISE, and VEIN. Although the center is to contain only a limited collection of resources, and not supplant or duplicate external resources, the center may be the first step in turning external resources into internal

resources. Some senior people in the PDE said that RISE should come into the SEA, or believe that "RISE wants to come into the SEA."

3. Michigan

Dissemination has long influenced Michigan's education practice. The concept of information transfer in the state was first introduced to the SEA through the Michigan-Ohio Regional Education Laboratory (MOREL) in the mid-sixties. A model for a regional information system was developed on the basis of an extensive needs assessment of public educators, university personnel, and representatives of business and industry. A MOREL staff member received a Title III grant in 1969 to design an information system for the MDE. His ideas were ultimately adopted by the SEA, first through the regional centers (REMCs) in 1970, and later through the coordinated delivery system of informational and programmatic resources developed with the State Capacity Building Program Grant.

Within the MDE, the Superintendent's Committee for Planning and Coordination established an Experimental Program Task Force in 1974 to define the concept and role of "demonstration site," and to examine the appropriate policy role for the state in dissemination. In 1975 a second task force recommended dissemination procedures for departmental responses to local requests for help. The task force first met infrequently to coordinate sporatic dissemination activities initiated by program service units where "categorical turfdom reigned supreme." Responding to federal legislation mandating dissemination, the SEA's early attempts to spread information and diffuse promising practices were uninformed by researcher theory. The task force first educated itself, and then began to train MDE personnel in dissemination and the diffusion of innovations.

The task force involves each office of each major division of the MDE except business and finance. The strategies formulated by the task force drew heavily from the Agricultural Extension Model. Their system is an institutionalized sequence of communication from the sources of information (research, demonstration projects) through linkage agents (professors, intermediate school district staff, SEA personnel) to ultimate adopters (teachers, principals).

Their first product, a State Capacity Building Program proposal to NIE, was rejected. One of the proposal developers claims that the proposal was so sophisticated in its application of communication theory that "the feds just couldn't understand it." The SEA received a

planning grant to "get its act together," sending the task force back to the drawing table. Another author commented that their proposal was "too outcome-oriented," that it proposed to provide direct problem-solving services to locals "rather than the mere ERIC outlet the feds had in mind." They rewrote the SCBP proposal "in federal language" and simultaneously produced an RDU proposal in 1976. They were pleasantly surprised when both proposals were successful.

Dissemination activity was fragmented prior to the SCBP grant from NIE in 1976. Tied primarily to categorical programs and MDE service areas, efforts to spread information were sporatic and uncoordinated. The Capacity Building Project established a formal system of state dissemination for the state which fused previously specialized channels of information flow into an integrated communication network. This two-way communication system responds to specialized needs initiated by the SEA staff, local decision makers, and practitioners in public schools. The knowledge base includes an extensive array of informational, programmatic, and human resources. The system uses SEA and intermediate service agencies to facilitate the information exchange process.

Michigan planners incorporated two central strategies in their design of an integrated dissemination system. The first, called "reactive," embodied in the Michigan Education Resources Information Center (MERIC), provides access to a variety of information and human resources. The second, labeled "initiative" and carried out through the Michigan Department of Education, continues to spread information relevant to its own programs. The majority of the MDE's dissemination activity is now coordinated through these two programs.

Jointly funded by the Michigan Department of Education and the Capacity Building Project, MERIC serves as the hub of the state's information service network. The center acts as a retrieval component for the kinds of information that require literature searches or access to fugitive documents, periodicals, and other sources not readily available to clients at the state, regional, and local levels.

The functions of linkage between available information and its consumers are performed by a variety of programs and individuals at the state, regional, and local levels. In addition to the retrieval specialists and problem negotiators within the MERIC, "part-time" linkers serve as intermediaries within the MDE through its 13 program areas. The Regional Educational Media Centers (REMCs), the Intermediate School Districts (ISDs), and the Regional Supplemental Centers (RSCs) all facilitate

the flow of information. Mechanical linkages, such as the telecopier network installed by the Kellogg Foundation at each REMC, are complemented by a cadre of information specialists ("key communicators") trained by MERIC, at each intermediate level.

While the primary objective of MERIC is to respond to requests for information, the Michigan Adoption Program (MAP) takes a more proactive tack. The MAP seeks to stimulate change in schools by funding the development of innovative projects, spreading knowledge about validated successes, and providing resources for local adoption of these schools. The program features a sophisticated process of identifying promising practices, an expanding base of quality-controlled programmatic resources, and a multi-level linkage system for service delivery.

As the administrator of Michigan's ESEA Title IV-C program, the MAP solicits proposals from local schools in four categories: planning, development, experimental, and demonstration. Projects move sequentially through these categories, reapplying for continuation funding at each step. Having completed the development phase, usually two years after initial funding, the project submits data documenting its effectiveness. If favorably reviewed by the classification committee, the project is eligible to receive funding for one year to diffuse to another school district. Only after the project can show that it has effectively replicated itself in an adopting site can it be classified as a demonstration project and become eligible to receive further Title IV-C funding for up to two additional years of within-state diffusion. This concept of validation places equal emphasis on the project's capacity to diffuse itself to other districts and its capacity to show effectiveness in the original development site.

The MAP also houses the Michigan State Facilitator Project, providing access to the more than 100 JDRP-approved programs of the National Diffusion Network. Several NDN programs have been "turnkeyed" into validated Michigan programs. Similar services are provided by MAP staff to local practitioners interested in adopting either NDN or Michigan programs.

The linkage system used by the MAP is built into the ten Regional Supplemental Centers (RSCs) funded through Title IV-C. Located within intermediate school districts, these centers are funded as agents of the MAP to develop and diffuse promising practices throughout the state. Each center has developed its own approach to disseminating these projects within its region. All are predicated on the principle of internal linkage, however.

The MAP is firmly institutionalized within the MDE. Although it is now supported primarily by federal funding, the supervisor of the program believes that the concept of program adoption has been so universally accepted by the state agency and local practitioners that even withdrawal of the NDN state facilitator funds would not eliminate the program. By establishing the legitimacy of using Title IV-C funds for the RSCs, ongoing program dissemination is assured. He even goes so far as to state that Michigan's own practice resource bank has become so diverse that including NDN programs may soon be more trouble than it is worth. He cites the inconsistency of training available fom NDN projects as a central liability of the program. In addition, he feels that exclusive usage of Michigan projects would enable MAP to provide immediate adoption services to interested LEAs. "When they're hungry, they have to be fed soon."

Exemplary programs disseminated through the MAP must be formally validated. NDN programs have all passed the JDRP in Washington. Michigan programs available for adoption through the MAP must meet the criteria for "demonstration" status established by the MDE Project Classification Committee. The purpose of establishing a Project Classification Committee made up of high level decision-makers from throughout the SEA is: (a) to provide communication and administrative coordination; (b) to provide evidence of SEA's commitment as to the importance and status of the projects classified; (c) to provide integrity to the procedures with a continuing body having permanent membership; and (d) to provide uniform quality control to projects selected across service areas.

Each service area solely determines projects for funding in their planning and/or development stages; however, only the Project Classification Committee can decide which projects may be funded for experimental and/or demonstration purposes.

Experimental or demonstration status is conferred on only those projects that offer a successfully developed delivery system whose substance is innovative, and whose operation possesses a high probability for successful replication. "Demonstration" status sites are eligible to receive funding (approximately $100,000/year) through Title IV-C to disseminate their projects throughout the state.

In addition to the exemplary programs available for adoption through the MAP, non-validated "promising practices" are also disseminated to local schools.

Dissemination activity in the MDE remains dispersed throughout the agency. The State Capacity Building Program project was established "to provide a support service for ongoing dissemination efforts" and to build a formalized linkage network throughout the state to deliver information services. In addition to being a central access point for all knowledge requests, the SCBP project has coordinated the previously specialized dissemination activities of the 16 MDE program divisions. Realizing the inherent limitations of a "centralized" project in a diverse, specialized state agency, the SCBP project staff have opted to support and coordinate rather than to direct. They also try to work through existing channels rather than establish new ones.

The SCBP project and the Experimental and Demonstration (E&D) Program often collaborate. Each promotes the use of the other's services. The Regional Service Centers established by the E&D Program (which house the MAP, Title IV-C, and the NDN state facilitator) also serve the SCBP project. The key communicators identified through these centers are the primary linking agents for both programs. In turn, information on the validated programs developed through the E&D Program are spread by the information dissemination center. The SCBP project has also used the REMCs, ISDs, and professional development centers.

The SCBP project also disseminates numerous products developed by the MDE. In addition to its own publications announcing the availability of resources and services, the SCBP project assists other programs to prepare and distribute their publications.

The SCBP project provides different dissemination services for each division of the SDE. For the Office of School Program Services, the SCBP project provides information and human resources to the schools in the GESTALT Program. The SCBP project staff works with instructional specialists to develop programs in the arts, health, science, and math. Teaming with personnel in the Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment, the staff has helped to develop curriculum for high needs schools. For the offices of Vocational and Special Education, which have their own dissemination programs and networks, the SCBP project plays a less active role.

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In this chapter, we have portrayed the school improvement efforts of the development SEAs in our sample. In general, the same factors (discussed in Chapter 3) that constrained maintenance SEAs propelled development SEAs into action: aggressive chief state school officers coupled with activist legislatures and/or

governors, adequate resources, and a history of state intervention made SEA-sponsored school improvement activities a reality. However, the types of initiatives that resulted varied tremendously, from small, discrete efforts without permanent (or indeed any) funding, to large, comprehensive programs aimed at changing SEA behavior as well as LEA operations. As we have seen, some of these efforts focused on outcomes, others on the process of school improvement. Some of the development SEA programs were explicitly based on dissemination practices, others used dissemination in a supporting role at best. Clearly, there are many ways to go about improving local schools.

The greatest transformations in SEA structure and function took place in Illinois, Michigan, California, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Setting up a service delivery system premised on dissemination strategies was the impetus for reorganization in the first four cases. The first two SEAs used these delivery systems as part of their school improvement efforts to implement new policies. The leadership of the California SEA, while not abandoning its diffusion programs, nevertheless felt it was moving beyond dissemination -- terming it a "slow" approach to classroom change -- to focus directly on enabling the schools themselves. Pennsylvania, through its school improvement program, wanted also to enhance school capacity as well as to use dissemination strategies. The effort was a major new one for the SEA with implementation not clearly specified in advance; in any case, the results were not to be seen at the time of our fieldwork.

But local schools are not the only ones affected by an SEA improvement initiative. In the course of research, we realized that the state education agencies themselves experienced the effects of school improvement efforts, though often inadvertantly. That is, SEA programs, especially the more ambitious ones, had impact on the SEAs as organizatons. More often than not this impact was not anticipated. This caused us to begin to view school improvement programs as innovations implemented not only by local schools but also by SEAs themselves. Chapter 6 takes up this matter.

CHAPTER 6:

APPLYING FINDINGS ABOUT SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION TO SEA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS

I. SEA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS AS INNOVATIONS REQUIRING IMPLEMENTATION

One of the major advantages of the design of the Dissemination Efforts Study was the number of vantage points from which we were able to examine dissemination efforts supporting school improvement. As we noted in the introductory chapter, our charge in the study of SEA dissemination and school improvement programs was to characterize the kinds of activities SEAs were initiating and to understand the role of federal dissemination efforts in those activities. The preceding chapters have detailed those activities and the factors affecting them. However, there were other variations among the SEA improvement and dissemination programs that were not captured by the model we set up at the beginning of the study. These differences had to do with the implementation of the initiatives within the SEAs themselves.

In writing the volumes for the Master Report Series, we have had occasion to step back and focus on local districts, schools, and state education agencies and their disparate types of personnel as organizations and individuals experiencing change. In so doing we noticed a number of parallels between the implementation of innovations at the local and SEA levels. In the local site study, we examined innovations that were being developed or adopted and the impact they had on individual teachers as users and on the school as an organization. In this chapter, we discuss SEA school improvement programs as innovations being developed (maybe even adopted, although our state study did not focus on origins of the programs) and implemented within the SEAs. We use some of the concepts originally employed in the local site component of the Dissemination Efforts Study to describe the differences we detected among our ten SEAs. These observations have to do with the unfolding of SEA school improvement efforts over time.

If one thinks of an innovation as something that requires new behaviors on the part of individuals, then any of the approaches states take to improve educational quality -- from comprehensive planning processes to changes in accreditation standards -- can be considered innovations. The nature of the innovation and the amount and kind of adjustments it requires of would-be users then become important variables. Here we are interested not only in the ultimate impact an SEA initiative might have on local schools, but also in the consequences of an improvement program for the SEA itself. It is our sense that very few SEAs are self-conscious about internal policy implementation, in part because they are focused on policy formulation, and in part because they are focused on policy for others, namely local districts and schools.

In this section, we look at several concepts having to do with change that our own local site research and that of others have shown to be important, focusing particularly on innovation and implementation issues. These concepts include time of inception, nature of the innovation, amount of change required by the innovation, nature of the implementation strategy, process of program implementation, stage of implementation, and outcomes of school improvement programs. We will describe each concept, explaining why it is important and illustrating it with examples from our ten case studies.

The last section of this chapter will outline some recommendations for SEAs undertaking school improvement programs. These suggestions come both from the particulars of the SEA case studies and more generalized reflection on important factors affecting implementation of innovations in all organizations.

A. Time of Inception

In the introduction, we outlined some changes in the definition of dissemination over the last ten or so years. Research in other fields, particularly political science, indicates that ideas and issues which are salient at the founding of organizations are often incorporated in the very structuring of new enterprises, producing entities with distinctive outlooks. A key to understanding the orientation of different school improvement programs, then, is to look at them historically, sorting out the major issues current at the time of their establishment. If one looks at the six development SEAs in our sample, the ones active the longest in dissemination also have dissemination most generically embedded in their school improvement efforts, with one exception. Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and California all were early experimenters with dissemination. School improvement for them in fact began with dissemination, the definition of the latter being expanded over time to include steps beyond awareness and spread.

California's current school improvement plan has consciously transcended the most dialog-oriented conception of dissemination, eschewing as "outmoded" the top-down implication of dissemination. In its place is a local enabling orientation that does not particularly value validated practices and other product/practice-bound influences external to the district. Dissemination activities proceed in California but they play a supporting rather than a strategic role.

The remaining two development SEAs were not early dissemination-oriented states. As we saw in Chapter 5, both Maryland and Arizona have crafted school improvement programs without dissemination as a major feature.

Time of inception is not a factor that can be manipulated by the formulations of school improvement programs, but it is a dimension that helps to describe and differentiate SEAs, thereby aiding our understanding of them.

B. The Nature of the Problem

SEAs that have developed school improvement programs are trying to solve problems that have arisen within their states. The initiatives may address problems having to do with either local school capacity or SEA capacity, or both. California, as we have seen, focused on enhancing local capacity, making relatively few changes in SEA structure. Illinois and Michigan focused on improving SEA service delivery systems and resources. The SEAs in Maryland and Pennsylvania were trying to have impact on both internal SEA operations and the functioning of local schools. The nature of the problems, too, varies. For example, the coordinated, cross-divisional efforts developed by some SEAs were attempts to deal with the internal fragmentation caused by categorical programs and unmonitored growth. Other SEAs decided that a major problem lay in the perception of the agency as a regulatory "bad guy" in the eyes of local school districts; these agencies felt the need to shift from an enforcement mode to a service orientation, downplaying regulatory and monitoring functions.

All SEAs have a need to address political problems by taking action; as we saw in the earlier chapters, many SEAs began school improvement programs to head off intervention by state legislatures and others. The nature of the problems and how a CSSO chooses to approach a solution depend greatly, therefore, on the factors we discussed in Chapter 3. A need for major change may be perceived by one and all, but a solution may be limited by political considerations to modest initiatives in one or two departments of the SEA.

Although it seems obvious that a problem should be diagnosed and needs assessed before policies or plans are formulated, in fact many organizations fail to do so. In the case of SEAs, many focus only on the problems that are to be found in local school districts and attempt to craft programs to deal with them without attending to potential barriers caused by SEA image problems, service delivery limitations, etc. The first step in crafting a school improvement plan, then, would be to assess problems in the SEA as well as in local schools.

C. The Nature of the Innovation

Once the nature of the problem has been defined, an SEA can begin to develop a plan to resolve it. We discovered in the local site study that it was very important for school personnel attempting to implement change to have a well defined practice. A well defined practice is one whose behavioral requirements are set out in a clear and ordered manner. Practices that are well defined can be assessed for scope, complexity, and so on, making it possible for an adopting/developing school or for external facilitators to judge the amount of effort it will require to implement the innovation.

To be able to describe precisely the practices we were examining in the local site component of the study, we developed what has come to be called the Practice Profile (Loucks & Crandall, 1982). A Practice Profile has three parts: component checklist, implementation requirements, and practice characteristics. The component checklist identifies a manageable number of components, each described behaviorally, as what someone actually does. The Practice Profile also provides a precise list of implementation requirements, especially useful for potential adopters to know what they would need to do before implementation and need to have to support it. Finally, the Practice Profile includes a system for assessing practice characteristics such as complexity, purpose and prescriptiveness. The characteristics we include are ones that research has shown to make a difference in whether and how new practices get implemented.

Making a Practice Profile for an SEA's entire school improvement effort would be, of course, a major undertaking and may not be realistic in many settings. But the concept is a very useful one. For example, policy formulaters are not accustomed to thinking of plans defined in behavioral terms; they tend to focus on specifying outcomes. Therefore, any attempt to visualize a school improvement program as an innovation requiring implementation and to focus on the demands it places not only on school personnel but also on SEA staff, would be a step forward.

We will not specify the components of school improvement programs here except to underscore the need to profile the innovation, portraying the actual projected behaviors of the SEA and outlining the scope, goals, processes, resources (both financial and personnel), etc., required to achieve the plan. Of our sample, Project Basic in Maryland was the most well defined program. Others had some clearly specified components but often neither their behavioral implications nor their interrelationships were articulated.

Once a Practice Profile has been created, it is not a difficult step to move towards an implementation plan, one that details how the organization is going to move toward exhibiting the components of the practice.

One reason it is important to have a clearly stated practice is so that participants in the implementation can have a common core around which to discuss, plan, and evaluate their activities. A clearly defined practice makes it possible for an assister to assess what is being done or not done, and to distinguish between that which is being done correctly and that which is not. In short, being clear about what is being implemented in the first place gives a point from which to begin for all concerned, users and assisters alike.

There is another even more critical rationale for clearly specifying innovations, to which we turn in the next section.

D. Amount of Change Required by the Innovation

Different innovations obviously require different amounts of change. If the needs of the SEA and districts for a school improvement program and the nature of the initiative are both known, then it is possible to begin to estimate the amount of change required to implement the program. Many SEAs now have sophisticated planning divisions whose staff may think in terms of implementation requirements. However, this thinking focuses solely on local school districts as implementers, ignoring the SEA role. In Michigan, for example, some early improvement efforts appeared to be launched without consideration of the amount of SEA staff time and resources required to adequately assist school districts in their implementations. When an ambitious improvement initiative requires large change both of the SEA and of local schools simultaneously, the results are likely to be frustrating for all concerned unless the demands of both implementations are met. Yet very few SEAs seem to allow for implementation within the agency itself. This can cause, at best, misunderstandings and at worst, delays and even derailment of the entire change effort.

Basic pedagogy begins with the premise that there is a student and a body of knowledge; it is assessing the gap between what the child knows and the information to be acquired that is the basis of the teaching craft, which after all is a change effort.

We found in the local site study that a key factor distinguishing among teachers as users of new practices was the amount of practice change they had to make. Teachers making small changes in practice were able to do so without extensive training and follow-up, and with minimal disruptions to either their classrooms or their schools. Teachers who were attempting major changes in their customary behaviors were quite another story. They required considerable assistance to work through the specifics of using the new practice, and the changes for them often had ramifications beyond the classroom: changes in facilities, scheduling, personnel allocation, resource distribution, etc., at the level of the school. Clearly, this was change of another magnitude.

SEAs, too, undertake implementation efforts that require more or less change. The small-change school improvement initiatives typically do not entail cross-divisional coordination within the agency. In addition, they are likely to be substitutions of one similar component for another.

Maine's modification of its local professional development system is an example of a change of this type (see Chapter 4). The local development option presumably required some shifts on the part of SEA staff, but entailed no major transformations either for them or for most local school personnel. Moreover, the SEA made available assistance for those locals who were trying to coordinate staff professional development across the district and therefore were undertaking a more major change effort.

As the case studies of local site implementation demonstrate vividly (see Volume IV), major change is a rough business, precisely because so much is new. We found the same to be the case in the state departments of education. Although our mission was not to assess internal SEA implementation efforts, we could not help but notice the impact of the scope and stage of implementation of each school improvement program on the SEAs themselves. Individuals and agencies at every level of the state educational structure, then, will experience some measure of change as the result of a state's school improvement initiative. The more comprehensive the program, the more demands it makes at every level, the more keenly these changes will be experienced. Although part of the rough start-up of Pennsylvania's school improvement plan can be attributed to the fact that it was more or less dropped on the SEA staff without notice (something we will discuss in more detail later), a great part of the disruption was just because the plan required a large change within the SEA.

Knowing the amount of change required by the school improvement effort can be useful in two ways. First, as we have discussed above, it allows the SEA to anticipate how much and what kind of assistance may be necessary to help state agency personnel implement the new program. Second, the SEA can see whether or not it will have the resources, both personnel and financial, to actually implement the program not only in the SEA but in local schools.

We saw in our study of states that some large school improvement efforts were in fact too ambitious: SEA staff were overwhelmed with the requirements of the program as were local school personnel; there were too few personnel and too little funds allocated to resolve the crises created either by ambiguous initiatives or large-change efforts. The result was morale-breaking for the SEA staff and disillusioning for LEA personnel, who do not take kindly to being saddled with demanding external expectations but no follow-through.

E. The Process and Stages of Implementation

1. Process

While the nature of the improvement effort or innovation formulated by SEAs is important, attention must also be given to the processes by which those improvements are implemented. Although it is common knowledge -- by way of extensive research and experience -- that innovation implementation is a process, SEAs vary in the extent to which they view it in such a manner. In some instances, new initiatives have been "implemented" -- meaning they have become requirements -- before any awareness or preparation of participants at any level has occurred, and the SEA and districts alike have fared little better than the novice teacher working to keep one lesson ahead of the pupils. In other cases, initiatives have been carefully planned in a developmental sequence prior to actual implementation in either the SEA or the local schools.

Of our sample, Maryland's school improvement plan was the one most clearly developed with an eye toward implementation, with the components and process specified, both for the SEA and for the local schools. Pennsylvania's plan specified the components of the school improvement program but not the implementation scheme, especially at the SEA level. Both Arizona and Illinois were hoping that their managerial processes would be incorporated by LEAs; however, the Arizona SEA was having some trouble developing its process model, while the Illinois Problems Index -- a process adopted on a voluntary basis -- appeared to be used by only those school districts already doing something similar -- a small fraction of the districts in Illinois. The Illinois SEA had not formulated a plan for instituting the IPI in districts with less pre-existing capacity to benefit from such a tool. As we noted above, Michigan's improvement efforts unfolded in successive iterations, apparently without much consideration of an overall plan; at least two initiatives foundered when the SEA was unable to deliver promised technical assistance to LEAs. Finally, California's program specified implementation in terms of LEA actions; relatively few demanding procedures seem to have been added at the SEA level.

2. Stages

We know from research on implementation that individuals and organizations change as they become involved in an improvement effort (Hall et al., 1975; Huberman & Miles, 1982). Their knowledge and behaviors change, becoming more familiar, skillful, and sophisticated in using, organizing, and refining a new approach. Attitudes and concerns change from a personal, internally focused orientation to one of grappling with the tasks involved, and finally evolve to allow increased attention to impact (Hall & Loucks, 1978). For local schools, impact may be student achievement; for an SEA, it may be some measure of increased capacity in local districts and/or in the SEA itself. Research has pointed out repeatedly that an implementation process designed with these stages in mind -- one which proceeds from awareness to commitment-building, delivers implementation assistance, and conducts follow-up and evaluation -- has the greatest potential for success (Fullan, 1982; Huberman & Crandall, 1982).

While implementation research has focused largely on local schools, we believe the same holds true for SEA staff seeking to implement a school improvement program for the first time. The stage of program implementation within the SEA, as we have noted, will also have impact on the nature and adequacy of services given to LEAs and others. We discovered in our ten study states that the SEAs were at different stages of formulation and implementation of school improvement programs. This clearly affected impact on both SEA staff and local school personnel. For example, at the time of our fieldwork, the Pennsylvania SEA was just embarking on large and complex school improvement programs. As the site report details, it was a rocky beginning (see Chapter 5); the SEA staff were preoccupied with worrying about the effects of the initiative on them. The Maryland SEA personnel, in contrast,

had achieved "routine use" (to use a "levels of use" term referred to in Volumes I and II of the Dissemination Efforts Study) of their program and were beginning to ponder refinements and revisions of it.

The fact that implementation unfolds in stages has implications not only for planning, but also for the design of evaluation and monitoring efforts. Formative evaluation would focus on different aspects of implementation at different stages; summative evaluation might not be appropriate until ultimate impact was beginning to be evident (see Section G).

As Murphy (1980) observed after reviewing the ostensible lack of impact of central policies at the local level,

> . . . I suspect that the organizational researchers' work has led to a view that understates the impact of central actors: by looking for results too soon after a program is initiated and by not looking in all the right places. Take ESEA Title I as an example. In its early days it was cited as a classic example of limited federal influence at the local level, only later, after 10 years or so in practice, to be cited as a program finally reaching its target population (Burnes, 1978). The impact of central intervention, like the impact of Chinese Water Torture, is poorly gauged by premature evaluation. (p. 47)

Indeed, some school improvement programs are intended to have impact immediately; others unfold in a sequence of phases. Maryland, for example, was following a multi-year plan to implement an integrated, comprehensive school improvement initiative; Nebraska's new testing requirement -- administered through categorical channels -- was to take effect in relatively short order. This and other considerations in the strategy of implementation we take up next.

F. The Nature of the Implementation Strategy

We believe, from our site report data, that the nature of the SEA's implementation strategy, whether explicit or implicit, will interact with the developmental stage in the change process of the individuals involved and thus influence the school improvement program's impact -- certainly initially and perhaps ultimately. Let us review some of the various considerations involved in an implementation strategy.

1. Staged vs. immediate

We alluded to this process consideration above. Small changes can be implemented immediately, for example, the substitution of one reporting form for another, or the requirement that teachers take extra credits in a certain subject; these types of modifications typically cause few structural shifts and have few ripple effects.

Large change efforts, on the other hand, seem to require staged implementation, although as we saw in the case of the Pennsylvania SEA itself, this does not always occur. The Pennsylvania CSSO launched his school improvement plan in the SEA with no advance warning and seemingly little participation by SEA staff. This heightened personal concerns, thereby increasing resistance to the changes that were proposed. Although things eventually worked out, a great deal of energy was expended during the rough start-up that could have been employed elsewhere.

Of course, it may be that Scanlon launched his program precipitously precisely because he saw that a slower approach would give opponents of the plan time to neutralize or even derail it. Political factors not infrequently overwhelm substantive considerations in the implementation of change, particularly at the SEA level.

2. One-time vs. repeat or continuous

Another aspect of strategy to be considered is whether the change is a one-shot effort or a new process that is to be repeated or operate continuously. For instance, the RDU projects, which operated out of SEAs along with other organizations in 19 states, worked through a problem-solving sequence once with the target schools (Louis & Rosenblum, 1981). In another example, the Maryland school improvement program worked through a sequence on essential skills; project managers then had to decide what, if any, other areas the SEA wanted to focus on -- they chose instructional programs for another school improvement sequence. In Illinois, use of the Illinois Problem Index was designed to be a repeated process. In California, the school councils were supposed to be continuously operating, permanent entities.

For the SEA, one-time implementations will mean a finite school improvement project; repeated or continuous implementations suggest a permanent SEA entity to carry out whatever the SEA initiative is.

3. Short term vs. long term

This issue of strategy overlaps with the one above. Small changes may be accomplished in an initiative of relatively short duration, but major change usually requires a long-term effort. Our field studies of local schools undertaking major change indicated that it takes from 18 to 24 months for the implementation to become routine (Huberman & Miles, 1982). When change in the SEA is involved as well, an even longer amount of time may be required. For example, the Maryland SEA's school improvement program unfolded over five years. Because of the political turmoil surrounding many SEAs, having a clear shot at one program for that length of time may be difficult to achieve.

4. Mandatory vs. voluntary compliance

This important consideration has been used in different ways in implementation strategies. As we described in Chapter 5, some SEAs mandate goals but leave the means to local discretion; others require a certain process to be followed but leave the objectives for local choice. Maryland stipulated the goals but the districts decided how best to meet them; California required use of a school improvement process but left the goals up to local districts. In an example of a much less far-reaching mandate, schools in Illinois were not required to use the Illinois Problems Index across the board; they were, however, asked to use it when applying for Title IV-C resources. In Nebraska, local districts were required to test, but the particular instruments were not specified; the SEA was pleased and surprised when 95% of local districts voluntarily adopted an SEA-developed test to meet the requirement.

The four examples cited above were new mandates; as we discussed in Chapter 4, other SEAs have harnessed old regulations to achieve school improvement goals, often politically more feasible than adding new requirements to the books. The Maine local professional development system was an instance of such retooling.

Evidence from the local site component of our study points to the utility of mandates plus assistance in school improvement efforts (Huberman & Miles, 1982). We found that teachers tend to perceive almost all change efforts as externally imposed, but that this did not seem to matter much as far as outcomes were concerned, in those situations where the required implementation was accompanied by assistance in making the changes. The mandates themselves came from a variety of sources, some federal, some state and local.

SEAs, too, have coupled mandates with technical assistance; in fact, all the major school improvement efforts we studied combined the two. Staff in at least one SEA, attempting to shift from an enforcement to a service orientation, had trouble being the least bit directive in their provision of school improvement assistance. Yet no guidance is worse than too much. Use of mandates does not mean that the SEA must be a "thug;" it does mean it should provide forceful, supportive leadership.

An example of another aspect of mandating that is relevant to our study of SEAs comes from Yin and Gwaltney's (1981) study of interorganizational arrangements for school improvement through knowledge utilization among SEAs, LEAs, and IUs. As the authors discovered, such relationships can be enhanced and outcomes more easily attained when an SEA "imposes congruent conditions" on the participant organizations. Yin and Gwaltney concluded,

> Thus, if an SEA desires to mandate certain changes in schools, it must orchestrate the mandate by (1) informing specific LEAs what they are supposed to do and what assistance they can expect from an [Intermediate Unit], and (2) simultaneously informing an [IU] of the specific LEAs to be assisted and the kind of assistance to be provided. Furthermore, if such information is made available early enough, both LEAs and the [IU] can prepare for their collaborative activities.
>
> In the case of the Thorough and Efficient Education mandate [a New Jersey school improvement initiative], the case study evidence suggests that such congruence did not initially exist. First, the SEA mandate was mainly for LEAs to improve the educational performance of their students and was set forth in only vague policy terms. Neither a specific curriculum topic, to be applied to all LEAs, nor a specific innovation was specified, making it difficult for the [IU] to prepare the appropriate assistance. Second, because the focus was on an ultimate outcome (student performance), which only has an indirect relationship to curriculum innovations, LEAs were not necessarily likely to consider the use of services from an [IU] as their top priority in responding to the mandate. In short, the Thorough and Efficient Education mandate did not provide the basis for immediate collaboration between an [IU] and an LEA (pp. 90-91).

The message here is that a mandate, to be effective, needs to specify not only required changes but also possible sources of assistance in making the changes.

5. Centralized vs. decentralized support structures

The discussion above of imposing congruent conditions brings us to consideration of the structure of the SEA implementation system. The Illinois school improvement effort was predicated on a decentralized delivery design involving regional service teams; Michigan, too, delivers many services through intermediate units. Other states in our sample did not have intermediate units at the time of our fieldwork, but chose to decentralize their implementation. The Maryland SEA, for example, "loaned" a full-time assister to each school district to facilitate the school improvement effort. This was feasible in part because Maryland is a small state and there are only 24 LEAs. In a decentralized strategy, the intermediate units and other organizations need to be included in planning, or at least be aware of what is expected of them. In Pennsylvania, there were comments from some intermediate units that they had been excluded from the consideration of school improvement activities in which they were expected to play vital roles.

6. Limited vs. comprehensive

This, in an implementation strategy, refers to two considerations. The first is the breadth or scope of the school improvement effort. For example, does the program involve more than one department or division of the SEA? Will it have impact on more than one component of the LEA? In Maryland, one goal of the school improvement program was to institute an academy for principals. Hornbeck gathered all the money for in-service from the various divisions, took a chunk off the top to fund the Principal's Academy and returned the remainder to the divisions with one stipulation: that the money remain pooled and that departments submit proposals for in-service to ensure quality and better coordination among divisions.

The first step of creating the academy for principals is an example of a change of limited scope; the second clearly is a more comprehensive change, requiring inter-division planning and coordination to present a coherent SEA in-service program for LEAs rather than multiple offerings as happened previously.

This consideration is mirrored in the nature of intended impact on the LEAs. The California SEA's school improvement program was intended to have influence on the school as a whole -- a comprehensive effort; other SEAs chose to try to affect one aspect of school functions, e.g., testing in one or two subjects -- a more limited approach.

The second consideration raised by the issue of limited vs. comprehensive has to do with the sequence of implementation. Some SEA school improvement efforts are limited to awareness only, for example, the publication of brochures highlighting the major findings of effective schools research. Others -- notably Maryland's -- worked through an entire implementation sequence -- from awareness, building commitment, and preparation, to implementation, follow-up, and evaluation. An SEA conceivably could limit its efforts to one of these stages, for instance, analyzing evaluation data for local schools.

7. Targeted vs. universal

This issue refers to the recipients of the school improvement program activities. Some SEA efforts have been designed for universal impact, with all LEAs in the state expected to take action; others have been planned as activities targeted for certain kinds or numbers of LEAs. Of our sample, Maryland's Project Star was devised to address the needs of the bottom 10% of Maryland schools. Michigan's High Needs program was aimed at a similar group of schools. Limited resources on the part of the SEA are often a rationale for specifying the audience for services, especially when assistance of some intensity is to be offered.

A variant on targeting is staggered impact, as happened in Pennsylvania when school improvement plans were formulated by LEAs in three waves; each year one-third of the LEAs were required to submit plans. Not only were SEA resources and personnel more adequate to meet the task of assisting, but the SEA also was able to learn from the initial wave and to make revisions to improve the experience for the subsequent cohorts of LEAs. Moreover, the first or pilot schools could also act as resources for others coming after.

8. Organization vs. individual

An SEA school improvement strategy usually makes a choice between change activities intended for individuals in their role groups, e.g., teachers, principals, etc., and change efforts aimed at the school as an organization. As we have seen, Maryland decided that principals were key to change in schools and established an academy for their professional development. Other SEAs -- Maine, for example -- have worked with teachers as a group by targeting staff inservice.

California, in establishing school study councils, clearly felt that the organization should be the locus of impact. Pennsylvania, after perceiving that interventions at the district level often had no impact on individual schools, shifted its strategy to focus on the individual building.

9. Coalition vs. sole-source

Another consideration, related to centralized vs. decentralized, is whether the school improvement strategy is premised on the SEA providing all assistance to LEAs or whether other organizations are systematically involved. As we saw in the discussion of centralized vs. decentralized, intermediate units play important roles in some SEA improvement activities. Only Pennsylvania, of our case study states, was making efforts to involve institutions of higher learning in their school improvement program.

In earlier chapters, we discussed the role of NDN state facilitator projects and other organizations unaffiliated with the SEA. While there may be tension, even competition, between the SEA and other educational organizations, if the SEA has a strong program underway, the other organizations often find themselves tailoring at least part of their products or services to meet LEA requests generated by state priorities. This was the case in Maryland and Illinois, and to some extent even in maintenance states such as Maine and Virginia where the voices of the SEAs are not very loud.

These nine considerations are among the many strategic choices made by SEAs as they develop school improvement programs. If SEAs can make decisions concerning these and other considerations in a conscious, planful manner, then their school improvement efforts will have a better chance of succeeding at both the SEA and the local levels.

G. Outcomes of School Improvement Programs

As we learned in the local site component of the study, the outcomes of school improvement programs vary greatly (Loucks et al., 1982). In general, every program has both implementation outcomes and ultimate outcomes.

Implementation outcomes include the extent to which the components of the program (e.g., testing system, planning process, teacher education courses) are in place at a local site; the amount of change that has occurred at a site with respect to these components; and the developmental level of participants within the implementation process [as indicated, for example, by their "levels of use" (Hall et al., 1975) or "stages of concern" (Hall & Loucks, 1978)]. Another category of implementation outcomes may also be important: those occurring at the level of the organization. These include change in the organization itself (e.g., organizational structure, problem-solving capacity), as well as institutionalization of a new practice [e.g., budget line items, training for new teachers (see Yin, 1978; Loucks et al., 1982)].

Ultimate outcomes are specific to the goals of a given state initiative. They include student achievement, teacher classroom behavior, or the number of high school graduates with employable technical skills.

All the organizations and individuals involved in a school improvement effort can be expected to have both implementation outcomes and ultimate outcomes, but most of the time SEAs focus only on the ultimate effects on districts and schools. Yet it may be impossible to tie an SEA initiative to changes in student achievement: the supposed cause and effect are too remote from one another.

This type of summative evaluation, then, may not be particularly productive for assessing SEA impact. What SEAs can focus on are implementation outcomes, at the SEA level as well as at the local level. Depending on the nature of the SEA program, if implementation has not gone well in the SEA it may be presumptuous to look for any effects at all at the local level.

We will not mention all possible implementation outcomes, but there is one that merits further discussion. Institutionalization of the change is a stage of implementation that has been scrutinized only recently. In an SEA school improvement effort, it may in fact be more difficult to achieve continuation and stability within the state agency than in local schools. Leaders and priorities shift frequently at the SEA level. In addition, many SEA school improvement efforts never receive budgets of their own which, aside from constraining their operations, lends an air of impermanence that sends a message to SEA personnel and ultimately to local school staff. In a state where SEA policy fluctuates almost continuously, LEAs adopt a wait-and-see attitude about initiatives from the state agency, having learned that most are flurries of activity that quickly fade.

If major changes take 1-1/2 to 2 years to stabilize -- and longer if change must occur in both the SEA and the local schools -- then careful consideration needs to be given to maintaining the effort intact at the SEA level for at least the anticipated life span of the implementation. This seemingly would involve working out an implementation plan before the start-up of the program so that unnecessary delays do not occur; making sure funds and staff are available; and engaging all the constituencies involved -- e.g., the legislative and governor -- a partnership in the school improvement effort. It also means attempting a manageable program that can reasonably be implemented -- a good program can always be expanded -- before terms of office expire or elections take place.

Finally, the managers of successful change efforts at all levels appear to have particular skill at turning barriers and constraints to their own purposes -- in other words, they take risks to solve problems. Talented people of this type are working in many state agencies; their skills should be used to address the considerations raised in this chapter.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SEAs UNDERTAKING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Given the considerations we discussed in the preceding section, what recommendations might we make for state education agencies undertaking school improvement programs? What activities might SEAs engage in that would be particularly helpful to local schools? The following discussion has a "hall of mirrors" aspect to it because we are advocating not only that SEAs promote the recent findings from implementation research, and offer assistance in implementation to local schools in the spirit of those findings, but also that they practice what they preach, paying attention to the implementation of change within the SEA itself.

It is important to remember that there are many different levels of activity possible for SEAs. At the most minimal level, a state agency could prepare brochures on a given topic to spread awareness and suggest contacts for further information. Other possibilities for action include in-house development of instruments, diagnostic tools, and other means for assessing various kinds of programs, processes, etc. An SEA could foster development of curriculum and instructional strategies. Or an SEA could promote exchange of these kinds of materials among local education agencies. Direct assistance to local schools is another option open to SEAs; arranging assistance -- matching needs with help -- is yet another possiblility. There are many other ways of taking action; the choice depends on what kinds of SEA resources are available and what the history of SEA assistance to local schools has been.

As we discussed in Section I of this chapter, our study and other recent research on the implementation of change have identified a number of factors associated with successful implementation. In this section, we make suggestions for SEA action based on six factors that seem to be particularly important.

- Identified Needs. Prior to developing a school improvement initiative, state education agencies should assist local schools in assessing needs. They should ensure that needs, gaps, and problems within the SEA itself are identified as well.

Identifying needs or clarifying the problem to be solved is a critical first step in any school improvement effort. Many SEAs are assisting in or promoting needs assessment or problem identification processes. Such activities may range from developing a procedure (such as the Illinois Problems Index) to mandating the creation of councils to address the question of needs in a school (as in California). SEAs might train local personnel to perform needs assessments or they might view such a task as part of a review process performed by SEA staff.

- Identifiable Practices. State education agencies should foster the development, validation, and diffusion of exemplary practices to meet state priorities.

Many states have formal validation procedures for promising practices while others have informal mechanisms. SEAs could assist schools in developing Practice Profiles of projects developed in areas that are state priorities. For example, the effective schools movement has spawned the development of many programs and projects, yet there has been little identification and evaluation of their critical elements in order to allow their implementation elsewhere.

- Implementation Assistance. State education agencies should view school improvement programs as innovations requiring implementation not only in local schools, but also in the SEA. Their plans should take into consideration the fact that implementation is a process that proceeds through predictable stages. Assistance appropriate to each stage should be included in the design of school improvement plans. State education agencies should encourage awareness of the importance of implementation assistance and, where possible, provide such assistance both to local schools and to SEA personnel engaged in school improvement efforts.

Some SEAs have external assisters working with local schools; these positions require training and support that could be provided by the SEA. Further, SEAs could work to make all those who help in the role of change agents aware of the importance of assisting users in the specifics of new practices, actually working through the mechanics of doing the new routines, etc. In like manner, external assisters should be urged to locate someone

within the school district -- a local facilitator -- who knows about these specifics and can help users after the change agent has gone. SEAs can also encourage the use of instruments such as those of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (i.e., Levels of Use and Stages of Concern) that assess users' stages at different times in the implementation process. SEAs could also promote attention to issues of replication and fidelity.

- Involved and Forceful Leadership. State education agencies should exhibit forceful leadership in their school improvement initiatives. They should urge local schools undertaking school improvement efforts to identify central office and building level personnel who can provide involved, forceful leadership to teachers engaged in practice improvement. SEA leaders should exhibit such leadership within the SEA, actively supporting school improvement efforts and ensuring that such efforts are provided appropriate resources.

Many SEAs have founded principal and other administrator academies for the professional development of these critical actors. Similar efforts for teachers -- or indeed any school-based role-holder -- should be developed. Sessions for these educators should be focused on the specifics of anticipated changes: What does a forceful principal actually do? What does support from an administrator look like? How does a principal supervise? How does a local facilitator help? Perhaps the most important contribution of these academies and other training sessions is that they can help administrators and teachers "make space for change." Shifting to new behaviors takes practice time that is difficult to come by in the middle of regular routines.

- Institutionalization. State education agencies should urge that attention and resources be allocated to the "back-end" of implementation, emphasizing follow-up assistance and institutionalization. This should be done for stabilizing changes both within local schools and the SEA itself.

By urging that resources and staff be committed on a permanent basis, and that local schools plan beyond the initial adoption phase, SEAs can foster an orientation to the "back end" of the implementation process. They can help local schools attend to issues of continuation by structuring the terms of grants so that institutionalization issues are addressed; for example, they can require that the local financial contribution gradually be increased and that other evidence of continuation be present.

- Impact. State education agencies should make attempts to evaluate the process of implementation in their school improvement efforts, both at the local level and within the SEA itself.

State education agencies can encourage or assist with summative evaluation -- testing, for example. But even more important, expecially at the early stages, is formative evaluation, i.e., evaluation which looks at intervening factors in addition to ultimate ones such as student achievement scores. These might include teacher morale and commitment, school climate, Levels of Use, extent of implementation, etc. Most of all, SEAs can foster the understanding that significant change takes time -- 18 to 24 months for a major practice change in a school -- so that school personnel should not be prematurely discouraged and tempted to dismantle an effort precipitously.

* * * * *

While attention to these six factors by the SEA may not totally guarantee successful school improvement initiatives, it maximizes their potential for success. These factors have all been shown by research to be critical to implementation of school improvement efforts -- and are, additionally, all within the control of the state education agency. In the next and final chapter, we return to a factor less controllable by the SEA -- the federal government -- examining the impact of federal consolidation on SEA-federal relationships and recommending options for continued federal involvement in school improvement.

CHAPTER 7:

CONSOLIDATION AND THE WANING OF THE FEDERAL ROLE: IMPACT ON SEA-FEDERAL RELATIONSHIPS

I. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL DISSEMINATION STRATEGIES ON STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

The federal government has fostered state capacity in dissemination in a variety of ways since the Pilot State Dissemination Project in 1970. What has been the impact of these initiatives? In the preceding chapters, we saw how state departments of education went about interacting with schools: some worked through categorical programs with minimal contact of either a regulatory or an assistance nature; others mounted major efforts to affect the education offered in local school districts. The excerpts from the site reports showed the major dissemination programs of the federal government playing more or less of a role in different states. In this section, we talk a bit more about three of these: the State Capacity Building Program, the National Diffusion Network (state facilitator projects), and the Title IV-C Local Development Program. Then, we summarize the most salient of the many learnings provided by this study of federal and state relationships in dissemination and school improvement.

A. The State Capacity Building Program and the SEAs

In general, the SEAs with higher initial capacity -- those that had a purpose for dissemination activities -- made considerable strides with federal dissemination funds during the 1970s. In fact, as we recounted in Chapter 1, it was because of the impetus from activist SEAs that the State Capacity Building Program was developed in the first place. Discretionary funds have served such SEAs well.

For the other states, the impact of federal dissemination funds is likely to be more ephemeral, especially if they are tied to projects of limited duration such as the State Capacity Building Program. In fact, in many states, particularly maintenance SEAs, the SCBP effort vanished without a trace once funding ended. In these cases, it was not just that the extra rooms in the SEA built by federal dollars were left empty or used only occasionally; they were dismantled altogether.

As we explained, seven of our ten SEAs had participated in the State Capacity Building Program by the time of our fieldwork. Of those seven, Illinois, which had been in the first cohort funded in 1975, had completed its project. There, the SCBP project had seen the creation of the Illinois Resource and Dissemination Network and the Education Information Center, both of which remained after the end of the grant.

Michigan and California joined in SCBP in 1976 with the second cohort of SEAs. Michigan's dissemination efforts were sporadic and uncoordinated prior to the SCBP project. The Capacity Building Project established a formal, two-way system of dissemination for the state. The Michigan Educational Resources Information Center (MERIC) was jointly funded by the SEA and the SCBP project -- it was designed to be responsive to requests for information; the SEA also initiated its own dissemination activities, to spread information relevant to its own programs.

California's SCBP project had the goal of providing information services. It did not coordinate other types of dissemination activities nor was it seen as a particularly critical component of the SEA's School Improvement Program.

Arizona's SCBP project began in 1977 with the third cohort of SEAs. While its goals had focused on coordination of activities and information within the SEA, the Basic Skills Plan in 1980 gave it the responsibility of creating a valid practices file with a concentration on basic skills. Here, then is an example of using generalized capacity to accomplish a specific goal.

Nebraska too began in 1977 but encountered problems coordinating generally unwilling SEA departments; moreover, practitioners in local school districts seemed reluctant to share promising practices. As we recounted in Chapter 4, the director of the SCBP project had turned to mini-linkers in 100 districts around the state to help facilitate information exchange.

Pennsylvania and Maryland initiated their SCBP projects with Cohort IV in 1978. Pennsylvania had already been active in dissemination, having founded the Pennsylvania Diffusion Network with Title IV-C funds in 1974. It had also participated in both the Pilot State Dissemination Project in 1972 and the Research & Development Utilization Project beginning in 1976. It appeared that the SCBP project got Pennsylvania back on track -- it was designed to coordinate dissemination activities among several agencies toward the purpose of school improvement -- after Secretary of Education Pittenger had somewhat shifted the focus. Pittenger was more interested in building capacity in local schools than in building SEA capacity -- orientations shared by both David Hornbeck, CSSO of Maryland (and once Pittenger's deputy), and Wilson Riles, CSSO of California.

Because of Hornbeck's orientation, Maryland's SCBP project had not been a major factor in Maryland's improvement effort. Cons rained by its subordinate position in the SEA, its sphere of action was somewhat limited. Moreover, the goal of the project was to create generalized capacity whereas Hornbeck, to the degree he called upon its services, attempted to marshall its resources toward the specific substance of Project Basic and the SITIP Institutes. Indeed, after something of a disagreement over the purpose of Project LIFE, staff created packages for the SITIP Institutes on their own initiative.

Of these several SCBP projects, the ultimate impact of the one in Nebraska may be the most in doubt, simply because its rationale for continued existence may not appear as compelling as other competing priorities. The presence of committed and skillful SEA staff may ensure its short term survival, but institutionalization did not appear to be secure, especially if the key staff were to depart.

As we have tried to indicate throughout this volume, building "capacity" for its own sake does not appear to be the most fruitful approach. In fact, we would echo the findings of the RDU Study, which indicated that capacity could be built by working through a process such as the one facilitated by RDU assisters, but it had to be a meaningful activity, not just an exercise (Louis & Rosenblum, 1981). As we saw, the Maryland SEA built a delivery system to implement Project Basic; once constructed, it could be (and was) employed for another initiative with other goals. In fact, the Maryland system was not built with State Capacity Building Program funds, although a somewhat similar system was developed with SCBP monies in Illinois, as we recounted earlier. The point of this is that if a state wants to do something, it will find a way. No amount of funds will galvanize an SEA that has not developed a need for a particular program.

B. The National Diffusion Network and the SEAs

There was a state facilitator project of the NDN located in each of our ten states. In four states (California, Michigan, Nebraska, and South Dakota) the state facilitator (SF) was located in the state agency itself. In Pennsylvania, the SF was housed in an intermediate unit. The state facilitator projects in the other five states were located in private firms.

As the discussion in Chapter 4 indicated, in Nebraska, South Dakota, and Maine, the state facilitator projects were among the few hearty dissemination activities around. In Maine, the success of the state facilitator was attributed to the fact that it was not located in the SEA; in Nebraska and South Dakota, the state facilitators had had to develop strategies to work around the constraint of their location in the SEA.

In Pennsylvania and Michigan, the state facilitator projects were part of the generic dissemination systems, working closely with Title IV-C, the SCBP project, and other dissemination entities. In Illinois, the SF, while located outside the SEA, also worked closely with Title IV-C undertakings, forming a parallel diffusion system.

In Maryland and California, the state facilitators occupied a middle ground between being the only game in town and being highly integrated in state efforts. In these states, the SFs supported the objectives of the school improvement efforts by tailoring their offerings and awareness conferences to state priorities.

On balance, location within the SEA itself seems not to have yielded any particular benefits and indeed often introduced constraints that inhibited the SF from realizing its mission. The best-of-both-worlds scenario was exemplified by those SF projects which had clear mechanisms for relating to SEAs but in no sense were in a formal reporting relationship. As we have noted previously, relatively few SEAs as entities are as ready to take advantage of the flexibility inherent in the SF function as are energized individuals who can blend their initiatives to the state's goals without being controlled by its operating structures.

As we discussed in Chapter 4, continuing projects, such as the NDN, have fared better in maintenance states than other types of projects. Given enterprising state facilitators and some time and discretion to formulate strategies appropriate for their states, these projects have begun to have impact. Just as importantly, they are a resource that is available should the SEA develop a school improvement initiative -- witness Maryland, even Arizona.

However, this raises two issues for federal consideration. One is how the federal government monitors such disparate individualized activities as those in Maryland, South Dakota, and Nebraska. For example, such development activities take time and do not show results in numbers of adoptions, perhaps for some time and maybe never. Are two adoptions in South Dakota worth twenty in Pennsylvania, where the environment is more receptive to innovation?

Another issue revolves around the resource pool available to state facilitator projects. Does the evaluation process in any way encourage development of new practices, for example, based on effective schools research? This is of concern because if SFs must perforce tie their outreach emphases to state priorities, can they do so without adequate representation in the resource pool of projects addressing SEA goals?

C. Title IV-C Local Development Program and the SEAs

Some states used their Title IV-C monies to build a generic dissemination system. The Michigan SEA created the Michigan Adoption Program; Illinois funded its Illinois Centers for Educational Improvement; and Pennsylvania founded its Pennsylvania Diffusion Network.

Virginia and Maine also had active Title IV-C programs, but they had not developed state systems to diffuse exemplary projects. Virginia's efforts emphasized adaptation, and meeting both state priorities and local needs. Maine also focused its Title IV-C efforts on state priorities and in addition, tried to spread the funds around among school districts.

Maryland, California, and Arizona all used their Title IV-C programs to back state priorities as well. Arizona's Title IV-C program, in particular, was planning to fund development in basic skills as its number one concern.

Finally, South Dakota and Nebraska had Title IV-C programs that were proceeding but not terribly active, the recalcitrance of local districts being cited as the major reason.

D. Learnings from the Study of the Configuration of Federal and State Dissemination Activities

- In many states, "school improvement" and "dissemination" activities overlap to the degree that they are indistinguishable from one another. As we noted in Chapter 1, the definition of dissemination has expanded from connoting only awareness to include choice, implementation, and institutionalization. School improvement efforts seem to involve a similar sequence of steps, whether what is being promulgated is an idea, a process, or a practice, whether it is initiated by the state or local schools, and whether it is voluntary or mandatory.

- The dissemination activities of the U.S. Department of Education are not themselves coordinated. State departments of education receive multiple messages from the federal government regarding the importance and operation of dissemination activities. As we have seen, some SEAs have responded by creating multiple dissemination efforts that mirror one-for-one their federal counterparts. Other SEAs have tried to consolidate their dissemination activities. Some of the development SEAs, in fact, now have more coordinated dissemination and school improvement efforts than the U.S. Department of Education.

- Federal initiatives in dissemination do not cause action at the state level; that is, they do not provide rationales in states where there is no intrinsic motivation for undertaking dissemination or school improvement efforts. Where there is motivation for action, there is no question that federal monies do enhance activities, that is, they provide an extra increment that may make the critical difference. On the other hand, however, it is our suspicion that the most ambitious SEAs would have found a way to do what they wanted even without federal funding -- where there's a will, there's a way.

- Nevertheless, the federal government's initiatives can be very important in fostering activities in many of these states, particularly ones with maintenance SEAs. While the federal dissemination strategies were not the sole <u>cause</u> of dissemination and school improvement efforts in any of our states, neither were they irrelevant or immaterial. Rather, they were <u>contributing</u> factors, which, taken together with other within-state factors that we have discussed, fostered efforts in dissemination and school improvement.

- From our study of maintenance SEAs, we have concluded that the most the federal government can hope for is that dissemination capability installed in a perfunctory way might come in handy should the state ever decide to take direct action on some issue. Unfortunately, however, many federal programs -- the State Capacity Building Program, for instance -- have a limited life-span and therefore are often no longer in place by the time a state decides to use them. As we noted in Chapter 5, many State Capacity Building projects disappeared without a trace once their funding ended. For states with maintenance SEAs, the NDN program offers more possibilities because the state facilitator projects not only can adapt to local conditions but also can be renewed over a long period of time. In such states, as we saw, considerable time must be spent in building awareness, overcoming skepticism, and fostering commitment.

- Although the federal dissemination programs loomed large in states with maintenance SEAs where there were few other such activities, in fact, federal programs were not more intrusive in local schools than state and local district efforts. The most active SEAs intervened much more in the daily lives of school personnel and students than ever the federal government did.

- While the National Diffusion Network promotes inter-state exchange of exemplary practices, several of the development SEAs have created their own diffusion systems for intra-state diffusion of validated innovations. Both styles of dissemination should be encouraged. One reason is that many states with maintenance SEAs have as yet no pool of exemplary practices developed within the state with which to work. A second reason is that states are naturally focused inward; despite federal efforts to promote regional activities and regional perspectives, the most salient boundaries are those surrounding states and almost nothing crosses them that is funded by state or local monies. Therefore, the resources that are promoted through the National Diffusion Network do more than just move exemplary practices from one corner of the nation to the other. They also bring people together from different states -- developer/demonstrators and local school personnel, for example -- in a way that allows everyone to see that many, if not all problems are similar across state lines. We will have more to say about the interstate commerce of ideas in the next section.

II. A RESIDUAL FEDERAL ROLE IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND DISSEMINATION?

What of the federal role vis-a-vis the state education agencies in the years to come? Ironically, even as more SEAs are shifting to development patterns of behavior, the U.S. Department of Education has returned to a maintenance mode. Indeed, there are many in the current administration who would like to see the Department of Education adopt the course of non-interference, as described in Chapter 4. It is, of course, not possible to know the precise nature of the future relationships which will develop among SEAs, LEAs, and the federal government. However, it is interesting -- and useful -- to speculate about the conditions which are likely to prevail over the next few years within the states and the federal government and their impact on SEA school improvement efforts. Based on past experience and current economic, political, and social trends, it is possible to predict that SEAs are likely to have less discretion and less power with Chapter 2 monies flowing directly to LEAs. However, with-in state factors are likely to push more and more SEAs into directive action of some sort regarding the quality of education in their states. Pressure from legislatures shows no signs of abating and state governors are becoming involved in education matters, many for the first time, especially as the links between education and economic factors strengthen.

These pressures are also felt by LEAs, which are likely to turn increasingly to sources outside their districts for assistance in tackling such challenges as technology, effective schools, etc. LEAs may well look to SEAs for assistance since that help will be less costly than aid from some other quarters. Whether or not SEAs will be able to meet the demand is another matter, however.

While some SEAs that have not been particularly active will be pushed to do something, other SEAs which have crafted school improvement initiatives could well be thrown off course by zealous governors or legislatures eager to have a say in school improvement. Education is no longer being left to educators (if indeed it ever was). Whether governors and legislatures will listen to SEAs remains a major question.

Even as the locals may be more receptive to SEAs, so ironically might some SEAs now be more receptive to federal input -- just as the federal government's role is receding. The tension over educational quality in the United States is mounting. In the past, the federal level has articulated the problem and the solution. Will that be the case this time?

It is difficult to even speculate about answers to this question. It is possible, however, to indicate appropriate alternatives even for a diminished federal role.

As we indicated in Chapter 4, there are options for action even for maintenance organizations, some of which the federal government has already chosen. The State Capacity Building Program could be considered an example of enhancement, for instance. In fact, the general strategy of working through state departments of education reflects an enhancement orientation. The U.S. Department of Education has also used the option of strategic retooling to advantage. Strategic coordination and direct brokerage are options that have not been embraced in an explicit fashion. Among the many alternatives for federal government involvement in school improvement are the following:

1. Dissemination

The federal government should continue to foster dissemination efforts, particularly continuing programs such as the National Diffusion Network. The NDN is an example of a resource and service delivery system that can be used in a variety of ways. It needs more funds to expand its operations. A particularly helpful move would be to create a national Office of Dissemination. Such an entity would not usurp the multiple federal dissemination programs currently in place but would orchestrate them, providing others both inside the federal government and out with one contact point. This office could manage or coordinate both the school improvement program file and the human resource file described below.

2. Direct Brokerage

The U.S. Department of Education could play an invaluable role in linking resources and services among state departments of education and other education organizations. A glimmer of this is already present in the Regional Exchange Program projects housed in selected educational laboratories, but their activities are regional and are for the most part limited to bringing states together for meetings or in providing services themselves. Just as the state education agencies seek to foster exchange of promising practices among school districts, so the federal government could promote and facilitate what could be called the interstate commerce of ideas and practices among SEAs and other educational organizations.

Already organizations such as the Educational Commission of the States and the Council of Chief State School Officers are keeping track of school improvement efforts in the various states; such a file could be the basis for matching SEA personnel considering specific initiatives such as state-mandated testing with SEA staff already experienced in such activities.

To be really useful, school improvement programs in the file would have to be described systematically -- in a Practice Profile of some kind -- and updated as necessary. The actual exchange of SEA personnel between SEAs has not been possible to this point, but the Department of Education could facilitate such programs without getting involved in the provision of services itself.

3. Technical Assistance

Arranging technical assistance for states (or through states, help for LEAs) could also be a federal activity. Due to its various efforts, the federal government has more dissemination and school improvement experience than all but the most seasoned SEAs. A human resource file on dissemination and school improvement could be maintained that would complement the file on programs. It would include listing of both individuals and organizations offering assistance in various aspects of school improvement and dissemination, thus providing a networking service.

4. Development

The federal government could also facilitate development of programs, processes, and practices around themes of nationwide interest and need. This is being done to some extent in the effective schools movement, but very few well defined practices have emerged from attempted applications of the research findings.

5. Strategic Coordination

In addition to directly funding development, the Department of Education could help coordinate development efforts going on in the various states. For example, many states have devised needs assessment instruments or evaluation tools. By pooling funds and personnel, other such resources could be created. The lateral links among state departments of education are not well developed; in fact, many SEA personnel cannot even make out-of-state telephone calls. The simple installation of a WATs line might greatly enhance exchange and joint development opportunities. Strategic coordination need not focus only on development, but could tackle other issues such as implementation, research, and so on.

6. Leadership

The U.S. Department of Education can and should continue to play a leadership role vis-a-vis states and localities. It can emphasize concerns that cut across many current issues such as technology and effective schools, by encouraging SEAs as well as local schools to think about implementation; the quality of new practices; institutionalization; and so on. Research on implementation has begun to achieve convergent findings that lend themselves to application in future school improvement efforts. Forceful leadership, as we have discovered in our research, is a critical factor in focusing energies toward solving educational problems.

7. Research

There is a continuing need for research on the implementation of change at all levels. Most state departments of education have neither the funds nor the capacity to study themselves or the impact they have on others, especially local schools. Such

research, funded at the federal level, could be application-oriented and prepared for SEA personnel rather than just for other researchers as often is the case. Multiple case studies can be very helpful for uncovering common dimensions and highlighting unique factors, both of which would be useful in planning school improvement efforts.

* * * * *

These various alternatives suggest that even in a diminishing role, the possible types and levels of federal involvement in school improvement efforts remain extensive. Though only one of many factors affecting SEAs, the federal government can -- and should -- continue to play an important part in state efforts to improve education, drawing upon the many assistance options appropriate at the federal level.

The combination of these federal options and the SEA recommendations presented in Chapter 6, coupled with the previous discussion of factors affecting SEA organizational behavior and their impact on school improvement and dissemination efforts, suggest that there are clear -- and diverse -- strategies which SEAs can employ in improving schools. Based on a number of factors and considerations, the most appropriate strategy or strategies have and will continue to differ among the SEAs. Differences in strategies and available options are not, however, an excuse for inaction. Even a maintenance SEA constrained by ardent feelings of localism and minimal resources can and should be involved in school improvement initiatives. How the recommendations discussed in Chapter 6 are translated into practice may and probably will differ between maintenance and development SEAs; but they remain equally applicable to all state education agencies, regardless of the SEA's pattern of organizational behavior and the many influences under which the agency operates. If the outcomes are to be improved schools and higher quality education, SEAs, in conjunction with LEAs and the federal government, must make a concerted effort to actively apply all that we know about school improvement and implementation to their improvement initiatives. Only in this way can we expect that SEAs will be successful in their school improvement efforts.

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